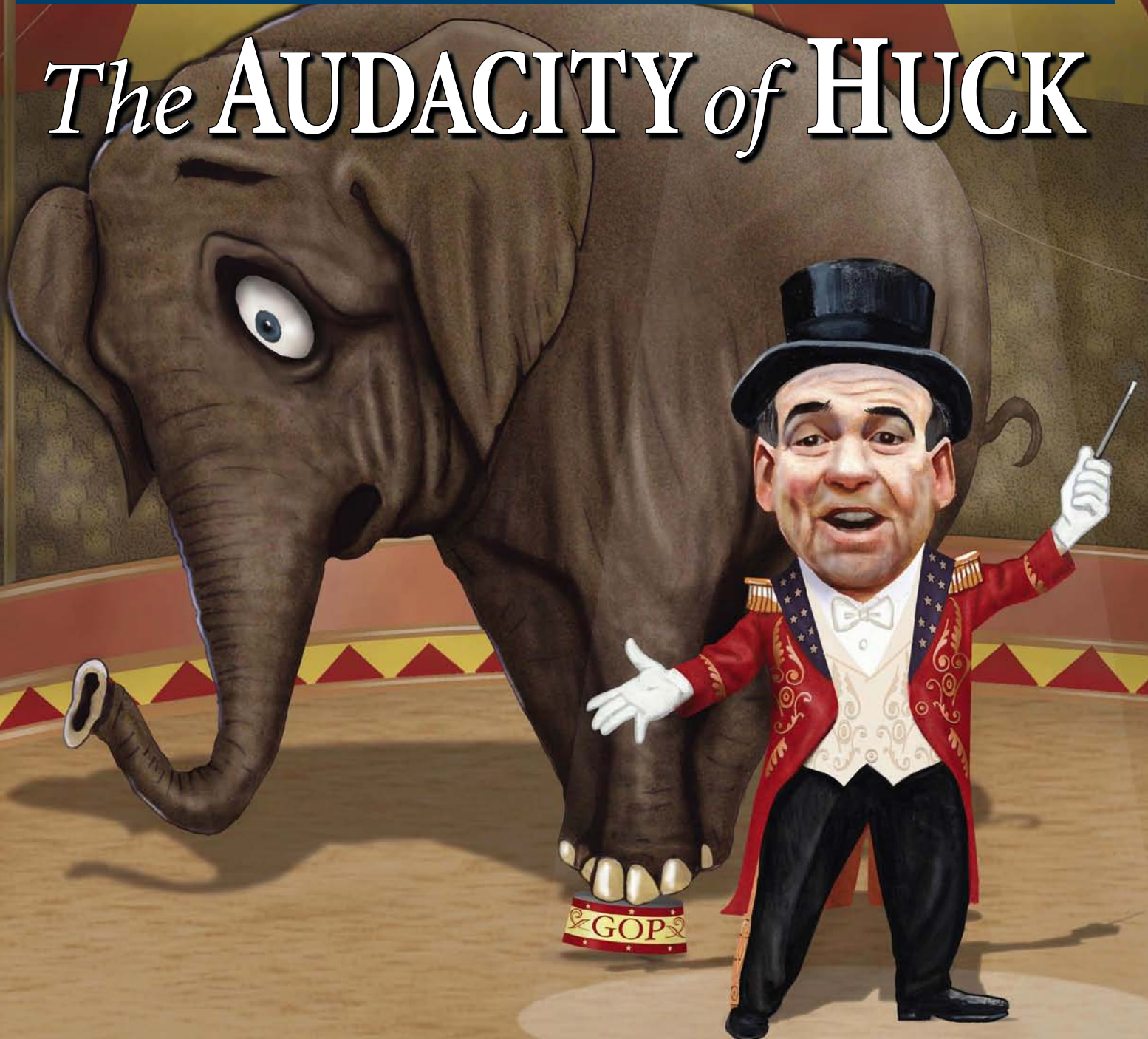


WHY OBAMA CAN'T WIN ■ WHO'S AFRAID OF SIBEL EDMONDS?

JANUARY 28, 2008

The American Conservative

The AUDACITY of HUCK



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RUDY AWAKENING

Michael C. Desch helps to sound a much needed alarm to ensure that the war-loving Giuliani does not get to the White House (Jan. 14). Giuliani has the idiotic notion, voiced here in Seattle, that the war in Iraq will be “over” when it is ready to serve as a stable ally of Israel in confronting Iran. To Giuliani, any country trying to demand minimum justice for the Palestinians is an “enemy” of the United States. This formulation would take the Republic to catastrophe. Great cover!

JAMES CANNING

Seattle, Wash.

RED STATE WHITEWASH

With regret I called the business office of *The American Conservative* to cancel my subscription. I regret it because I have thoroughly enjoyed and agreed with your positions almost 100 percent. But “Castro’s Enabler” by Fred Reed (Dec. 17) is so bigoted and insulting that I must question the ethics of the publisher and editor in allowing such a collection of lies, distortions, and vitriol all packaged in one cheap article.

Not only is Reed wrong about attributing the blockade mainly to political pressures from the “false Cubans” in Miami he so clearly hates, but in the same article he ends up promoting the very propaganda that he claims to debunk: that the American embargo is solely responsible for the economic and social failure in Cuba. Those who argue like this never tell you that commerce with the rest of the world, including societies like Canada and France, has not helped Cuba’s situation. Usually those who refuse to address that issue are the socialists and liberals who do not care about truth or self-evident reality but only ideology.

Reed whitewashes the 45-year regime of hellish cruelty that has caused a large segment of the population to migrate,

often at the risk of their lives. The Gulag-style prisons that await those who even mildly disagree with the regime mean nothing to Reed, who cares more about the improbability of eating shrimp with mayonnaise. He is too busy noting the absence of cyber cafés in Cuba to note the plight of a tortured people he callously pretends to care about. No, in his fantasy, it is the “rude and arrogant” Miami Cubans who do not care about the victims of the embargo.

You should not have printed an article that parrots the liberal, soft-on-communism line that one usually finds on the Left. It is sheer propaganda and utopian nonsense mixed with anti-Hispanic bigotry—and, yes, I know Reed is married to a Mexican lady, which means nothing in this context.

Shame on you for publishing such malodorous trash.

ROBERT CARBALLO

Via e-mail

TEAR DOWN THIS EMBARGO

Fred Reed’s article is heretical. It also is correct. Nothing has served to prolong the shelf life of the Castro government in Cuba more than the continued American embargo. If anything, the embargo represents the continued specter of “Yanqui Imperialismo,” thus providing a central rallying cry for the Castro revolution in the eyes of the Cuban people: their privations are the result of American imperialism, and only by sacrifice and serving the revolution will the Cuban people advance. That, trade with everyone else, and generous subsidies from the Chavez government in Venezuela.

When the floodgates of American trade and tourism are opened to Cuba, the Castro revolution will become as much of an anachronism as the embargo is now. As the Cuban people embrace American goods, services, and opportu-

nities, posters of Che will be replaced by Nike and Coca-Cola ads.

We’ve witnessed a similar phenomenon in Vietnam, where 30 years after North Vietnamese troops rolled into Saigon under the banner of Soviet-style communism, the government is communist in name only, while free enterprise increasingly flourishes in both southern and northern Vietnam.

By perpetuating the embargo, the United States is simply cutting off its nose to spite the face of a Communist invalid. It all seems silly considering the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War supposedly ended nearly 20 years ago.

ERIC J. SMITH

Bloomfield Township, Mich.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WARD

In his review of *Twilight at Monticello* (Jan 14), Bill Kauffman mentioned in some detail the ward republics that Thomas Jefferson believed were necessary to preserve our liberties. Those ward republics do actually exist, though in various degrees of dormancy. As the key elements of the Public Land Survey System, which Jefferson helped devise in 1785, they are called townships and cover six miles square, more or less. Usually associated with land measure in terms of section, town, and range, they are completely inactive here in California, but in the Midwest the township governments are quite active and might provide a basis for a township revival.

DENNIS ANTHONY

Los Angeles, Calif.

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.



CANDIDATEPHOTOS.COM

[COVER]

The Audacity of Huck

BY MICHAEL BRENDAN DOUGHERTY The Republican establishment wants Christian voters, not Christian leaders. **Page 6**

[ELECTION]

Untested Savior

BY SCOTT MCCONNELL Barack Obama fulfills Democratic dreams for a truly transcendent leader—and Republican hopes for an easy target. **Page 8**

[INTELLIGENCE]

Found in Translation

BY PHILIP GIRALDI FBI whistleblower Sibel Edmonds's allegations are too explosive for Washington to investigate. **Page 12**

[VIRTUE]

Honor Killing

BY PAUL ROBINSON A nation's reputation is less sullied by defeat than by not knowing how to lose. **Page 17**

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS

COLUMNS

11 Patrick J. Buchanan: Adjustable-Rate Republic

26 Daniel Larison: Ron Paul's New Hampshire Freeze-Out

35 James P. Pinkerton: I ♥ Huckabee

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: Cravenness Commends Him; Excommunication Bull; Make-Believe Racism

21 Deep Background: Flight Path to Damascus

ARTICLES

15 Jason Motlagh: Are Pakistan's democratic hopes buried with Bhutto?

19 Daniel McCarthy: Warmonger Seeks Comeback

23 Jim Pittaway: Sacking Missoula

ARTS & LETTERS

27 Steve Sailer: Daniel Day-Lewis in "There Will Be Blood"

28 Austin W. Bramwell: *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left, From Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* by Jonah Goldberg

30 Peter Suderman: *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible* by A.J. Jacobs

33 Philip Weiss: *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* by Jacob Heilbrunn

[ELECTION]

MOTORIZED MITT

As we go to press, Mitt Romney has won an impressive—and somewhat unexpected—victory in Michigan, routing John McCain and Mike Huckabee. By the time subscribers read this, the race may be reshuffled again. But Romney's success pulls his campaign off life support and may even boost him to the sort of front-runner status he enjoyed before the voting started.

TAC has said comparatively little about Romney, in part because it is not entirely clear who he is and what he stands for. Once a blue-state Republican governor, he has run a campaign pandering to the conservative establishment. On foreign-policy issues, this is not wise. But in some of his posturing—his relative intolerance of illegal immigration for example—he makes good sense.

Romney is the very opposite of a conviction politician, and after eight years of George W. Bush, that begins to seem like an improvement. Would he allow his popularity ratings to sink into the 20s in support of some delusionary policy of using American troops to turn the Middle East into Middlebury, Connecticut? Not likely. Romney strikes us as a Republican Michael Dukakis, also a Massachusetts governor: an intelligent technocrat, able to absorb and synthesize expert advice and act upon it. We have no sense of him as a visionary leader of the conservative movement, or anything else. But that might be a point in his favor.

The other notable thing about the Michigan result is that neocon-favored candidates are not doing well. Rudy Giuliani is floundering at 3 percent in most contests, waiting behind his Florida “firewall.” Norman Podhoretz and Daniel Pipes, counting on Rudy to bomb Iran for them, cannot be pleased. Then the septuagenarian McCain surfaced, bellowing about a hundred-year occupation of Iraq, and the neocons grew

excited again. But a troubled economy does not seem strong electoral ground for the aged Navy pilot. Where will they go next? It's not clear, but the most interesting subplot of the Republican race is which candidate the neocons will hitch their wagon to in order to ensure that the next presidency is marked by war and the quest for empire.

[ALLIES]

COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

In the week prior to the Michigan primary, an e-mail addressed to “Catholic voters” warned against social conservative, Mike Huckabee, because of his ties to evangelical pastors such as John Hagee who have been critical of the Catholic Church. The “voter alert” mentions darkly that Huckabee has been endorsed by *Left Behind* author, Tim LaHaye “who called Catholicism a ‘false religion.’”

While members of all faiths are free to reject a candidate for any reason (or no reason at all) it would be a shame if Christians embraced the Left's politics of victimology and allowed small offenses to tear apart a productive political alliance. No one can be surprised that evangelicals reject the Catholic Church; acceptance of one set of doctrines is an implicit rejection of another. LaHaye's summation of Catholicism mirrors Pope Benedict's view that non-Catholic religions are “gravely deficient.”

But the pro-life and pro-family movement has relied on the recognition that Christians who disagree on matters of faith can still work together. After all, when Bush nominated Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court, her evangelical co-religionists resisted the pull of identity politics and backed the more accomplished Catholic, Samuel Alito, believing he would better serve their cause. That seems like a better model than refighting the Reformation.

[CULTURE]

RIGHT TO OFFEND

Ezra Levant's case before Alberta's Human Rights Commission showcases the logical end of political correctness: the death of free speech. Two years ago, Levant, in his capacity as editor of the *Western Standard*, published the infamous Dutch cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. A Muslim cleric complained to the HRC, and Levant was impelled to appear before a government bureaucrat to explain why he published the cartoons. In effect he was asked to justify his ancient rights as a citizen.

The HRC was originally formed to adjudicate cases of discrimination in housing but has granted itself authority to govern political discourse. More troubling is its efficiency: it has a 100-percent conviction rate in cases that fall under the “hate messages” provisions of its



charter. The Alberta HRC recently convicted a Christian pastor, Steven Boissin, for a human-rights violation with no other evidence than the testimony of a homosexual who claimed to have a “surge of fear” after he read a letter to the editor in which the preacher expressed his opinion of homosexuality. Hurt feelings were enough for the state to order Boissin to “apologize” for his behavior.

Levant has uploaded videos of his interrogation on YouTube. His questioner sits in an ordinary conference room and calmly takes notes. She doesn’t rave as tyrants do in film, but the persecution is real. Levant poignantly informs his interrogator that she is being used to carry out an Islamic *fatwa* in the name of secular human rights. The irony is lost on her.

Levant’s case is instructive. While our government doesn’t subject its citizens to these inquiries, Americans already accept “sensitivity trainers” at their corporations and “diversity officers” in their universities. How long before these functionaries seek the security of government employment?

If convicted, Levant hopes to take his case into Canada’s actual courts—where common law would likely vindicate him—and put the HRC itself on trial. He is an impassioned and eloquent defender of the right to free speech. Americans should listen.

[WORLD]

LAME DUCK’S FIRST STEPS

In the final year of his second term, President Bush seems to have finally reached the conclusion that a settlement between Israelis and Palestinians leading to a Palestinian state would be good for the Middle East, and for America. He’s correct, but his ability to provide any leadership is maybe 10 percent of what it would have been five years ago.

The president said some important things on his trip: he called the Israeli occupation of the West Bank by its right-

ful name, an occupation; he said the Israeli checkpoints that strangle Palestinian economic and social life must cause “massive frustration,” which understates the point. He added that a future Palestinian state must be contiguous and not shaped like “Swiss cheese” to accommodate Israeli settlements. This is Mideast Reality 101, but in seven years in office, Bush had never forthrightly acknowledged it.

Will there be a follow through? Few in close touch with the region believe that the bilateral peace talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will advance by themselves for very long—despite the fact that Olmert appears to realize that a fair settlement would be good for Israel, and Abbas is desperate for one. Olmert cannot make the necessary withdrawals unless Israeli politicians across the spectrum understand that the United States is committed to a Palestinian state and will no longer subsidize the Israeli occupation that stands in its way. But a lame-duck president lacks the clout to deliver this message forcefully enough.

[MEDIA]

BIRTH OF A NOTION

The New Republic’s revelation that Ron Paul’s old newsletters occasionally included paranoid and genuinely offensive statements caused the usual round of Beltway tut-tutting about “populism” and “racism.”

The radical libertarian guru Murray Rothbard knew that in matters relating to race people tend to strategize for political gain. Many in ambitious Washington hold vicious beliefs about race privately yet hide these thoughts when composing boring studies of economics. The authors of Paul’s newsletters may be the first people in history who secretly wanted to write about monetary policy, but concealed their true selves by pretending to be racists. ■

The American Conservative

Publisher

Ron Unz

Editor

Scott McConnell

Executive Editor

Kara Hopkins

Associate Editor

Michael Brendan Dougherty

Literary Editor

Freddy Gray

Film Critic

Steve Sailer

Contributing Editors

W. James Antle III, Andrew J. Bacevich, Doug Bandow, James Bovard, Michael C. Desch, Philip Giraldi, Paul Gottfried, Leon Hadar, Peter Hitchens, Daniel Larison, Christopher Layne, Eric S. Margolis, Daniel McCarthy, Tom Piatak, James P. Pinkerton, Justin Raimondo, Fred Reed, R.J. Stove, Thomas E. Woods Jr.

Art Director

Mark Graef

Associate Publisher

Jon Basil Utley

Publishing Consultant

Ronald E. Burr

Office Manager

Róisín Smyth

Copy Assistant

John W. Greene

Founding Editors

Patrick J. Buchanan, Taki Theodoracopulos

The American Conservative, Vol. 7, No. 2, January 28, 2008 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. TAC is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$89.97 other foreign, via airmail. Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries—

By phone: **800-579-6148**

(outside the U.S./Canada 856-380-4131)

Via Web: www.amconmag.com

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

When ordering a subscription please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to letters@amconmag.com. For advertising sales or editorial call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on January 17, 2008.

Copyright 2008 *The American Conservative*.

The Audacity of Huck

The Religious Right roils the establishment by backing one of its own.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

MIKE HUCKABEE was supposed to be an amusing sideshow. Just last August, Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani dominated the GOP big tent, capturing the spotlight with their massive fundraising efforts and early endorsements. Meanwhile, without a single reporter in tow, Huckabee wandered around New Hampshire and Iowa, speaking to perhaps a dozen people at a time, joking that other candidates “pay \$150 for an exfoliation. I could just hand them a bar of Lava soap.” Beltway conservatives and consultants, enjoying Huck’s genial act, speculated that he might make a nice vice president and laughed at his harmless quips. They aren’t laughing anymore.

As Huckabee moved up in the polls, his campaign chairman Ed Rollins declared the Reagan coalition dead, implying that Huckabee could form a new one in its place. The leaders of the conservative movement struck back: free-market activists spent thousands on ads to halt Huckabee’s rise in Iowa, and editors of the leading conservative publications denounced his “populism” and “evangelical identity politics.” Rush Limbaugh told his 20 million listeners that a Huckabee nomination would be a disaster.

Then he started winning. In Iowa he beat the heavily funded, establishment-approved Romney by 9 points and moved from sixth to third in New Hampshire, scrambling the entire Republican race. He is running close to John McCain in national polls and leading in delegate-rich states like South Carolina and Georgia.

Huckabee has convinced his support-

ers that the Religious Right has too long endured second-class citizenship in the conservative movement. Ironically, the anti-elite posture that Beltway conservatives taught heartlanders to assume when confronting the media or academia has been turned against establishment conservatives themselves. David Brooks declared in the *New York Times*, “The old guard threw everything they had at him, and their diminished power is now exposed.”

The Beltway Right has reason to worry. As a rhetorician, Huckabee is as good as anyone in politics today. He can stir an audience like Barack Obama, but he adds a deft sense of humor and pop culture that allows him to keep up with media figures like Stephen Colbert or Jay Leno—qualities unexpected in a leader of the Religious Right.

But obvious as his talents are, Huckabee’s policy prescriptions have been hard to decipher. On foreign policy, he grabbed headlines by denouncing the Bush administration’s “arrogant bunkermentality,” and in a nod to realism, he wrote that the U.S. policy toward Iran should be containment, not confrontation. He says that there are options between “shock and awe” and “cut and run.” But just as observers began speculating that Huckabee might decouple Christian conservatives from the aggressive foreign policy of the Bush administration, he suggested that Palestinians could form their own state in Egypt or Saudi Arabia. So far, he has managed to make members of nearly every school of foreign policy uneasy.

Asked about economics, Huckabee claims to be “a Main Street Republican, not a Wall Street Republican” and preaches a message of economic independence—even nationalism. Speaking to a group of social conservatives, he declared, “A country that cannot feed itself, that cannot fuel itself, and that cannot fight for itself with its own weapons which it manufactures itself is a nation that is not longer free. . . . I don’t want to see our food come from China, our oil come from Saudi Arabia, and our manufacturing come from Europe and Asia.” Yet Huckabee has not called for an end to NAFTA or for implementing protective tariffs, insisting against evidence to the contrary that he is a free trader.

Establishment conservatives, deciding that the joke from Hope has gone on long enough, have begun sneering with increasing condescension. “That bait shop on the lake—it’s looking good,” Lisa Schiffren blogged on National Review Online. “You’ll be surrounded by nice neighbors, real Christians, and you can be the smartest guy in the room. . . . Remember Huck—Jesus wouldn’t be dumb enough to go into politics. You were right on that one. Maybe it’s not what he wants from you either.”

Former House majority leader Dick Arney penned a blistering attack on Huckabee’s “feel good politics” and told *TAC* that he “sounds more like John Edwards than John Edwards.” According to Arney, the conservative movement must balance its priorities: “The traditional, successful, happy Reagan coalition is a coalition of conservatives that came

from an economic wing and a social wing tied together by their commitment to constrain the growth of government.” Arney laughs at the idea that Republicans want evangelicals in the backseat: “I can’t remember someone who has been elected besides Reagan that hasn’t caused Jim Dobson to say, ‘He’ll betray us.’”

Asked which candidate comes closest to his vision for the party, Arney chooses Rudy Giuliani. The former mayor’s tax plan, Arney enthuses, “is the biggest supply-side statement of any candidate in the race,” and Giuliani’s commitment to small government commends him to the conservative movement. Of course, Giuliani is also pro-choice and pro-civil-unions.

It is precisely Arney’s understanding of “balance” that has created the backlash for Huckabee. Consider: Romney’s conversion to social conservatism is recent and, to many, unconvincing. Yet *National Review* endorsed him. Giuliani has been considered an enemy of social conservatism since he was first elected mayor of New York. And John McCain opposed the Bush tax cuts. Writing in *The American Spectator*, George Nuemayr sympathized with evangelicals: “How is it that the bar of conservative entry for a presidential nominee lowers for the Romneys and McCains, then rises for the Huckabees?” Nuemayr suspects that vitriol is directed at Huckabee not because he “takes this or that heterodox position on issues of economics/trade/foreign policy; it is that he’s a transparent Christian conservative.”

Joe Carter, an activist at the Family Research Council, took a leave of absence to spend a month acting as Huckabee’s rapid-response man. He seconds Nuemayr’s analysis and highlights the barely disguised class conflict in the GOP: “The establishment Republicans don’t want some hillbilly preacher to be president.” To Carter and others, the conservative establishment’s contempt

for Huckabee feels familiar. It mirrors the liberal establishment’s disdain for conservatives generally. And so just as Beltway conservatives have taught middle America to resent the liberal elites, so Huckabee and his supporters have leveraged evangelical discontent at those who tell them to “sit down and take what the party gives you.”

The turning point in Huckabee’s campaign came at the Values Voters Summit held by FRC last October. All the Republican candidates came to speak to the largely evangelical crowd, and the leaders of social conservatism hoped to announce their united endorsement. Though Romney was given the keynote spot, Huckabee blew the doors off the conference, saying, “I come today as one not who comes to you, but as one who comes from you. ... I think it’s important that people sing from their hearts and don’t merely lip-synch the lyrics to our songs.” Attendees bought Huckabee’s identity-based appeal and voted for him overwhelmingly in the event’s straw poll.

In the weeks that followed, Huckabee continued to call for evangelical solidarity, telling Zev Chafets of the *New York Times*, “If my own abandon me on the battlefield, it will have a chilling effect.” Recently, campaigning in Michigan, Huckabee told reporters, “Many of us who have been Republicans out of conviction ... the social conservatives, were welcomed in the party as long as we sort of kept our place, but Lord help us if we ever stood forward and said we would actually like to lead the party.” For years the Beltway Right had posed to heartlanders as an “us,” but for evangelicals supporting Huckabee, *National Review*, the Club for Growth, and the Republican establishment now resemble a “them.”

Huckabee’s success also corresponds with an intellectual shift among conservatives focused on rising middle-class anxiety. This summer, Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam are set to publish *Grand*

New Party, in which they argue that the Republican Party must address the economic needs and aspirations of its middle-class base, transforming itself into the party of Sam’s Club rather than the country club. They praise Huckabee’s populist sensibilities.

Similarly, in a column that told Huckabee-fearing Republicans, “Be Not Afraid,” neoconservative David Brooks framed the preacher’s rise this way: “Huckabee understands that economic well-being is fused with social and moral well-being, and he talks about the interrelationship in a way no other candidate has.” Brooks argued, “A conservatism that pays attention to people making less than \$50,000 a year is the only conservatism worth defending.” Huckabee doesn’t yet demonstrate policy sophistication, but it’s easy to imagine reform-minded conservatives refining his instincts.

Even if Huckabee fails to capture the nomination, he may still effect significant change in the GOP coalition. In 2004, Republicans nabbed three out of four white evangelical votes. Karl Rove credited them with Bush’s re-election. But just as these voters demonstrated their power, their leadership was disappearing. James Kennedy and Jerry Falwell have passed away; others like James Dobson are on their way out of public ministry. Carter believes Huckabee can easily fill the void of evangelical leadership, but he warns that Republicans shouldn’t expect another compliant pastor who will shepherd the masses to the polls then otherwise leave them alone. “Because Huckabee doesn’t come from the establishment, he doesn’t owe them any favors. He has the potential to lead a new movement—and not just evangelicals alone.”

If the affable preacher consolidates his influence over the largest bloc of voters in the GOP, he’ll have the whip hand in the Republican coalition. No wonder the establishment is winning. ■

Untested Savior

Barack Obama answers Democrats' longing for a candidate who is above politics, but he would probably lead them to disaster in November.

By Scott McConnell

THE NATION'S OBAMA swoon has eased, arrested by Hillary's swell of tears. But the force behind it gathers for resurgence. Its intensity is driven by yearnings as old as society itself, for a politics of the transcendent. Some intellectuals who fled Europe in the 1930s described a continent-wide "wholeness hunger"—a longing for release from corrupt, narrow, divisive parliamentary factions, a search for a more poetic, more binding politics.

There is some of that in the Obama fervor. In the wake of his Iowa triumph, one young light of the progressive blogosphere wrote, "Obama's finest speeches do not excite. They do not inform. They don't even really inspire. They elevate. They enmesh you in a grander moment, as if history has stopped flowing passively by, and, just for an instant, contracted around you, made you aware of its presence, and your role in it. He is not the Word made flesh, but the triumph of the word over flesh, over color, over despair." One Chicago newspaper reporter's book on Obama is proceeding with the working title *The Saviour*.

Obamaism responds to a specifically American need. In his lucid study of the candidate, *A Bound Man*, Shelby Steele notes that America has "has undergone a moral evolution away from racism so transformative that there is now something like a desire in the body politic to see a truly qualified black person in the White House." But no previous black

candidate has been plausible. Obama is, passing without ambiguity the ability threshold for holding the highest office.

In the age of affirmative action, attending Harvard as a black would not suffice. Winning the editorship of the *Harvard Law Review*—a position, Steele notes tersely, "gained through competition rather than through the suspension of competition"—most emphatically does. And Obama's political talent mitigates his experience deficit. He bests his rivals at responding to tedious political questions with a nuanced or memorable phrase. He was correct about the Iraq War from day one. He can write. The autobiographical *Dreams From My Father*, with its vivid portraits and sardonic self-awareness, is a literary accomplishment no contemporary senator could match. Again, Steele: "The point is that Obama has separated himself from the deadly stigmas of black inferiority and white paternalism. This does not mean that people won't consider his race in some way as they ponder his candidacy. It only means they can consider his candidacy without feeling guilty, intimidated, or otherwise manipulated by his race." Not only is he plausible, his candidacy implicitly promises the healing of America's oldest wound.

National polls show Obama running as well or better than Clinton in matchups against Republicans. The conventional pundit wisdom is that while a dissolving GOP coalition could be

re-united against Hillary, Obama would have greater appeal to independents and restless Republicans. Such prognoses come not only from progressives, happy to tell you that leading Republicans have no idea how to run against a black candidate, but from conservatives, too. David Brooks has touted Obama's moderate, consensus-seeking character in language so glowing some liberals interpreted it as a prelude to endorsement.

There is another opinion about this, however. It is held by some traditional conservatives who oppose Bush's Iraq and Iran policies, those most open to supporting a Democrat if the Republicans, as seems likely, promise a foreign policy of more of the same. In a nutshell, this view is that Hillary would face a difficult race, but would probably prevail, as could have Edwards or Joe Biden or a fairly generic Democrat in a year when the Dems have a major tailwind. Obama would be their weakest candidate, who could lead his party into an electoral disaster.

This is not because of Obama's race, which—other factors held equal—probably attracts more voters than it puts off. The weakness is the other major quality that progressive intellectuals find appealing in him: his cosmopolitanism, his relative unrootedness, the sense that he is harbinger not only of a new America where race doesn't matter but of a globalized world where national sentiment is on the way out. He would not only be the United States' first black

president, but, to borrow immigration activist Mark Krikorian's useful term, its first post-American one as well.

In his foreign-policy address before the Chicago Council on Global Affairs last April, Obama asserted that America's security is "inextricably linked to the security of all people," a recipe for global interventionism so promiscuous as to make neoconservatives almost prudent by comparison. He is a proponent of global free trade and high levels of immigration. Much of his memoir is devoted to his quest to connect with an extended family in Africa. This worldman aura is not without appeal, especially after eight years of a president deaf to what foreigners think and feel. But taken as far as Obama does, it would be an electoral liability.

One must also consider that the Republicans—perhaps especially those now overflowing with praise for Obama—might actually want to win the presidential election. In Obama, they would have an opponent who has never faced a well-funded foe in a tough one-on-one race, never encountered a barrage of negative TV advertising. He might be able to take a political punch well, he may not have a glass jaw. But there is no evidence for it. Obama's one statewide campaign was a romp over Alan Keyes, prompting one wag to remark that Obama's general-election prospects would indeed be excellent if the Republicans nominated Alan Keyes.

Obama has never faced a white opponent who hit hard or low or who struck at the very quality that makes him most appealing to the Left blogosphere, his exoticism. He won't face that test in the primaries: the nearest the Hillary camp might come is former Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey's probably disingenuous claim that he "liked" Obama's name and background and presumed ability to connect with the world's one billion Muslims. Liberal bloggers slammed

Kerrey for propagating a vicious "smear," reminding one and all that multicultural good manners and political correctness are still the single factor that unites Democrats.

Republicans would not necessarily share such qualms. What might their campaign look like? You needn't be a political consultant to imagine a pretty effective one. The natural point of approach, of course, would be the name. Can we acknowledge that no contemporary Trollope or Allen Drury seeking to dramatize the emergence of a talented half-African presidential contender would consider burdening his hero with a name that evokes *both* of America's best-known enemies in the War on Terror? It would be far too over the top for social realism.

cosmopolitan than the rest of the country, has been intrigued with Obama for years. But by this summer, both parties will be playing to a broad electorate, in most cases more than twice the percentage of voters who turn out for a contested early state primary. Compared to primary voters, November voters are lower on the political awareness scale, less educated, less prosperous, less tuned in. Many will be forming an opinion about Barack Obama for the first time during and after the conventions, and branding him could be done comparatively quickly. Democrats in 1988 were astonished at how rapidly Michael Dukakis was "defined" by Willie Horton and how fast the Duke's double-digit lead in national polls evaporated. They of course knew that Dukakis was a

NO CONTEMPORARY TROLLOPE OR ALLEN DRURY SEEKING TO DRAMATIZE THE EMERGENCE OF A TALENTED HALF-AFRICAN PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER WOULD CONSIDER BURDENING HIS HERO WITH A NAME THAT EVOKES BOTH OF AMERICA'S BEST-KNOWN ENEMIES IN THE WAR ON TERROR.

As the Democratic presidential nominee, Obama could quickly become known as Barack Hussein Obama. Republican commercials and talk radio would guarantee it. Negative TV spots could be relatively banal, pointing to some liberal highlights from Obama's state legislature record—one very strong pro-abortion vote and another against people who used unregistered guns to protect their homes against intruders would do the trick. And then, a voiceover, intoning something like "Barack Hussein Obama—Right for America?"

A colleague asserts that this would be seen as no more than a childish playground taunt, that by autumn Americans will be so acclimated to Obama's name that no repetition of it could weaken him. I doubt this. The political class, far more

competent and tested governor, a proven debater, no slouch on law and order. How could blue-collar voters not see this? Similarly, John Kerry's team found the Swiftboat charges so ludicrous they didn't deign to answer them. But, to the campaign's remorse, many voters found them believable enough. On what basis should we assume that white working-class voters (precisely those most resistant to Obama's electoral appeal thus far) would be completely unmoved by a campaign geared to question Obama's "American-ness"?

There is another vulnerability to Obama that his Democratic opponents would never exploit. Shelby Steele is right that America is more than ready for a black president and that Obama, in his present persona, does indeed

embody “something that no other presidential candidate possibly can: the idealism that race is but a negligible human difference.” Like Tiger Woods, the nation’s most popular sports figure, he is a child of two races, embodying racial reconciliation in his very person. Hybridity, to use the fashionable academic term, is a growing phenomenon in America, driven by a burgeoning number of interracial marriages, visible in every large American city and even more so on elite college campuses. Obama is a natural beneficiary of this trend.

But there is another Obama, a young man abandoned at age 2 by his African father, who spent decades trying to fill the resulting void, in great part by trying very hard to become African-American. In his “60 Minutes” interview, Obama describes himself as “rooted in the African-American community” and also “more than that.” But this claim to “rootedness” in black America is nonsense. *Dreams From My Father* is a sometimes fascinating story of a sensitive young man trying to graft for himself an African-American identity, with very limited opportunities to do so. Obama was raised by his white mother, by an Indonesian stepfather, and then by his maternal grandparents in multiracial but not very black Hawaii. His efforts to become “black” without the context of any serious African-American community are labored. One of the book’s charms is that Obama the writer sometimes seems to recognize this, describing his self-absorbed quest, then stepping outside to ever so faintly mock the character trying so earnestly to be black.

But while the quest for black identity is interesting on a human level, it is not necessarily the fodder of a mainstream presidential campaign. One of Obama’s major stepping stones toward blackness was his membership in Jeremiah Wright’s Trinity United Church of Christ,

a sprawling Afrocentric enterprise on Chicago’s South Side. Obama first became involved with Wright as a poverty organizer and later joined the church, with its “black value system,” “black freedom,” black this and black that. Trinity United is an atavism of the 1960s, with all the ties anyone would care to find to Louis Farrakhan and Muammar Quadaffi.

Identity politics is always understandable and often forgivable. I know of no evidence that Trinity United Church harmed anyone, and it probably did many attendees a lot of good. Nevertheless, Obama’s long-time membership gives rise to Steele’s impassioned and eloquent question:

That he would join a church so steeped in blackness, with so many other churches available, only underscores his determination to be transparently black. How else to reconcile this church membership (and for over a decade) with the fact of his own family—his white mother, grandmother and grandfather. It was not a ‘Black Value System’ that prepared Obama so well for the world. Nor was it ‘black community’ or ‘black family.’ It was not black anything. One could more easily argue that his good luck was to be born into a white ‘family,’ ‘community,’ and ‘value system.’ ... So how can Barack Obama sit every week in a church preaching blackness and not object—not stand and proclaim that he was raised quite well, thank you, by three white Middle West-erners?

If that might be difficult to answer; the politics of it are not. Presumably they explain why, at the last moment, Obama cancelled plans to have Reverend Wright give the convocation at his campaign kickoff. A great part of

Obama’s appeal is his blend, his hybridity—a brand in danger of being undermined by his very biography. If Republicans want to link Obama to the kind of black nationalism that would make many of his would-be supporters (and not only them) uneasy, they have only to make Jeremiah Wright and his preachings well known in the months leading up to November. This would be denounced as race-baiting, and may indeed be unfair. My guess is that the present-day Obama has moved beyond the young man searching for ways to be authentically black and is now more in synch with the Ivy League intellectuals who have flocked to his banner than with Afrocentrists of the South Side. But politics is often unfair.

Perhaps the Republicans have so internalized political correctness that it would be unthinkable for them to chip away at Obama’s character. But political parties, by their nature, want to win. John McCain has already opined, “Obama wouldn’t know the difference between an RPG and a bong,” foreshadowing a campaign that emphasizes personality more than issues, terrain hardly favorable to Obama.

Obama’s backers seem strangely overprotective of their man, as if they can’t conceive how any fair-minded person would not adore him. The few times questions like those raised above have been posted in the comments section of the highbrow progressive blogs, the reaction has been visceral, immediate, strident: it is racist even to mention this stuff, a point pounded home in vitriolic terms. The intense repudiation of Bob Kerrey’s rather innocuous observation about Obama’s name and background was astonishing, suggesting not confidence but fear that a very tender area was being exposed. It would seem that they too worry that their poetic and exciting candidate may actually be far weaker than the polls show. ■

Forgive Us Our Debts

Since it began to give credit ratings to nations in 1917, Moody's has rated the United States triple-A. U.S. Treasury bonds have been seen as the most secure

investment on earth. When crises erupt, nervous money seeks out the world's great safe harbor, the United States. That reputation is now in peril.

Last week, Moody's warned that if the United States fails to rein in the soaring cost of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, the nation's credit rating will be downgraded within a decade.

Our political parties seem oblivious. Republicans, save Ron Paul, are all promising to expand the U.S. military and maintain all of our worldwide commitments to defend scores of nations.

Democrats, with entitlement costs drowning the federal budget in red ink, are proposing a new entitlement — universal health coverage for the near 50 million who do not have it — another magnet for illegal aliens. Moody's is telling America it needs a time of austerity, while the U.S. government is behaving like the governments we used to bail out.

California has already hit the wall. With an economy as large as a G-8 nation, the Golden State is looking at a \$14-billion deficit in 2009 and a \$3-billion shortfall in 2008. Governor Schwarzenegger has called for slashing prison staff by 6,000, including 2,000 guards, early release of 22,000 inmates, closing four dozen state parks and a 10-percent across-the-board cut in all state agencies. The Democratic legislature is demanding tax hikes, which would drive more taxpayers back over the mountains whence their fathers came.

Meanwhile, Washington drifts mindlessly toward the maelstrom. With the dollar sinking, oil surging to \$100 a barrel,

the Dow having its worst January in memory, foreclosures mounting, credit-card debt going rotten, and consumers and businesses unable or unwilling to borrow, we appear headed into recession.

If so, tax revenue will fall and spending on unemployment will surge. The price of the stimulus packages both parties are preparing will further add to the deficit and further imperil the U.S. credit rating. This all comes in the year that the first of the baby boomers reach early retirement and eligibility for Social Security.

To stave off recession, the Fed appears anxious to slash interest rates another half-point, if not more. That will further weaken the dollar and raise the costs of the imports to which we have become addicted. While all this is bad news for the Republicans, it is worse news for the Republic. As we save nothing, we must borrow both to pay for the imported oil and foreign manufactures upon which we have become dependent.

We are thus in the position of having to borrow from Europe to defend Europe, of having to borrow from China and Japan to defend Chinese and Japanese access to Gulf oil, and of having to borrow from Arab emirs, sultans and monarchs to make Iraq safe for democracy.

We borrow from the nations we defend so that we may continue to defend them. To question this is an unpardonable heresy called "isolationism."

And the chickens of globalism are coming home to roost.

We let Europe get away with imposing value-added taxes averaging 15 percent on our exports to them, while they

rebate that value-added tax on their exports to us. Thus the euro has almost doubled in value against the dollar in the Bush years, as NATO Europe begins to bail out on Iraq and Afghanistan.

We sat still as Japan protected her markets and dumped high-quality goods into ours and China undervalued its currency to suck jobs, technology, and factories out of the United States. Now China and Japan have \$2 trillion in cash reserves. The Arabs have an equal amount of petrodollars. Both are heading here to spend their depreciating dollars snapping up U.S. assets — banks, ports, highways, defense contractors.

America, to pay her bills, has begun to sell herself to the world.

Its balance sheet gutted by the subprime mortgage crisis, Citicorp got a \$7.5-billion injection from Abu Dhabi and is now fishing for \$1 billion from Kuwait and \$9 billion from China. Beijing has put \$5 billion into Morgan Stanley and bought heavily into Barclays Bank.

Merrill Lynch, ravaged by subprime mortgage losses, sold part of itself to Singapore for \$7.5 billion and is seeking another \$3 billion to \$4 billion from the Arabs. Swiss-based UBS, taking a near \$15 billion write-down in subprime mortgages, has gotten an infusion of \$10 billion from Singapore.

Bain Capital is partnering with China's Huawei Technologies in a buyout of 3Com, the U.S. company that provides the technology that protects Pentagon computers from Chinese hackers.

This self-indulgent generation has borrowed itself into unpayable debt. Now the folks from whom we borrowed to buy all that oil and all those cars, electronics, and clothes are coming to buy the country we inherited. We are prodigal sons, and the day of reckoning approaches. ■

Found in Translation

FBI whistleblower Sibel Edmonds spills her secrets.

By Philip Giraldi

MOST AMERICANS have never heard of Sibel Edmonds, and if the U.S. government has its way, they never will. The former FBI translator turned whistleblower tells a chilling story of corruption at Washington's highest levels—sale of nuclear secrets, shielding of terrorist suspects, illegal arms transfers, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, espionage. She may be a first-rate fabulist, but Edmonds's account is full of dates, places, and names. And if she is to be believed, a treasonous plot to embed moles in American military and nuclear installations and pass sensitive intelligence to Israeli, Pakistani, and Turkish sources was facilitated by figures in the upper echelons of the State and Defense Departments. Her charges could be easily confirmed or dismissed if classified government documents were made available to investigators.

But Congress has refused to act, and the Justice Department has shrouded Edmonds's case in the state-secrets privilege, a rarely used measure so sweeping that it precludes even a closed hearing attended only by officials with top-secret security clearances. According to the Department of Justice, such an investigation "could reasonably be expected to cause serious damage to the foreign policy and national security of the United States."

After five years of thwarted legal challenges and fruitless attempts to launch a congressional investigation, Sibel Edmonds is telling her story, though her defiance could land her in jail. After reading its November piece about Louai al-Sakka, an al-Qaeda terrorist who trained

9/11 hijackers in Turkey, Edmonds approached the *Sunday Times* of London. On Jan. 6, the *Times*, a Murdoch-owned paper that does not normally encourage exposés damaging to the Bush administration, featured a long article. The news quickly spread around the world, with follow-ups appearing in Israel, Europe, India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Japan—but not in the United States.

Edmonds is an ethnic Azerbaijani, born in Iran. She lived there and in Turkey until 1988, when she emigrated to the United States, where she received degrees in criminal justice and psychology from George Washington University. Nine days after 9/11, Edmonds took a job at the FBI as a Turkish and Farsi translator. She worked in the 400-person translations section of the Washington office, reviewing a backlog of material dating back to 1997 and participating in operations directed against several Turkish front groups, most notably the American Turkish Council.

The ATC, founded in 1994 and modeled on the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, was intended to promote Turkish interests in Congress and in other public forums. Edmonds refers to ATC and AIPAC as "sister organizations." The group's founders include a number of prominent Americans involved in the Israel-Turkey relationship, notably Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and former congressman Stephen Solarz. Perle and Feith had earlier been registered lobbyists for Turkey through Feith's company, International Advisors Inc. The FBI was interested in ATC

because it suspected that the group derived at least some of its income from drug trafficking, Turkey being the source of 90 percent of the heroin that reaches Europe, and because of reports that it had given congressmen illegal contributions or bribes. Moreover, as Edmonds told the *Times*, the Turks have "often acted as a conduit for the Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's spy agency, because they were less likely to attract attention."

Over nearly six months, Edmonds listened with increasing unease to hundreds of intercepted phone calls between Turkish, Pakistani, Israeli, and American officials. When she voiced concerns about the processing of this intelligence—among other irregularities, one of the other translators maintained a friendship with one of the FBI's "high value" targets—she was threatened. After exhausting all appeals through her own chain of command, Edmonds approached the two Department of Justice agencies with oversight of the FBI and sent faxes to Sens. Chuck Grassley and Patrick Leahy on the Judiciary Committee. The next day, she was called in for a polygraph. According to a DOJ inspector general's report, the test found that "she was not deceptive in her answers."

But two weeks later, Edmonds was fired; her home computer was seized; her family in Turkey was visited by police and threatened with arrest if they did not submit to questioning about an unspecified "intelligence matter."

When Edmonds's attorney filed suit to obtain the documents related to her

firing, Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft imposed the state-secrets gag order. Since then, she has been subjected to another federal order, which not only silenced her, but retroactively classified the statements she eventually made before the Senate Judiciary Committee and the 9/11 Commission.

Charismatic and articulate, the 37-year-old Edmonds has deftly worked the system to get as much of her story out as possible, on one occasion turning to French television to produce a documentary entitled "Kill the Messenger." Passionate in her convictions, she has sometimes alienated her own supporters and ridden roughshod over critics who questioned her assumptions. But despite her shortcomings in making her case and the legitimate criticism that she may be overreaching in some of her conclusions, Edmonds comes across as credible. Her claims are specific, fact-based, and can be documented in detail. There is presumably an existing FBI file that could demonstrate the accuracy of many of her charges.

Her allegations are not insignificant. Edmonds claims that Marc Grossman—ambassador to Turkey from 1994-97 and undersecretary of state for political affairs from 2001-05—was a person of interest to the FBI and had his phone tapped by the Bureau in 2001 and 2002. In the third-highest position at State, Grossman wielded considerable power personally and within the Washington bureaucracy. He had access to classified information of the highest sensitivity from the CIA, NSA, and Pentagon, in addition to his own State Department. On one occasion, Grossman was reportedly recorded making arrangements to pick up a cash bribe of \$15,000 from an ATC contact. The FBI also intercepted related phone conversations between the Turkish Embassy and the Pakistani Embassy that revealed sensitive U.S. government information was being sold

to the highest bidder. Grossman, who emphatically denies Edmonds's charges, is currently vice chairman of the Cohen Group, founded by Clinton defense secretary William Cohen, where he reportedly earns a seven-figure salary, much of it coming from representing Turkey.

After 9/11, Grossman reportedly intervened with the FBI to halt the interrogation of four Turkish and Pakistani operatives. According to Edmonds, Grossman was called by a Turkish contact who told him that the men had to be released before they told what they knew. Grossman said that he would take care of it and, per Edmonds, the men were released and allowed to leave the country.

Edmonds states that FBI phone taps from late 2001 reveal that Grossman tipped off his Turkish contact regarding the CIA weapons proliferation cover unit Brewster Jennings, which was being used by Valerie Plame, and that the Turk then informed the Pakistani intelligence service representative in Washington. It is to be assumed that the information was then passed on to the A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation network.

Edmonds also claims that Grossman was instrumental in seeding Turkish and Israeli Ph.D. students into major American research labs by godfathering visas and enabling security clearances. She says that she reviewed transcripts in which the moles in the U.S. military and academic community involved in nuclear technology reportedly carried out several "transactions" involving the sale of nuclear material or information relating to nuclear programs every month, with Pakistan being a primary buyer. In the summer of 2000, the FBI recorded a meeting between a Turkish official and two Saudi businessmen in Detroit in which nuclear information stolen from an Air Force base in Alabama was offered: "We have a package and we're going to sell it for \$250,000," the wiretap allegedly recorded. "The network

appeared to be obtaining information from every nuclear agency in the United States," Edmonds told the *Times*.

She further reports that beginning in 1999, the FBI was investigating senior Pentagon officials who were assisting agents of foreign governments, including Turkey and Israel. Edmonds has not publicly named names at the Pentagon, but a website linked to her appears to be a non-incriminating instrument for identifying suspects without doing so directly. Its "rogues gallery" includes photos of Richard Perle and Douglas Feith. Perle was chief of the Pentagon's prestigious Defense Policy Board when Edmonds was working at the FBI, and Feith was undersecretary of defense for policy. If either were being investigated, it would be a matter of record, as would any reasons for dropping the investigation. "If you made public all the information that the FBI have on this case, you will see very high-level people going through criminal trials," Edmonds told the *Times*.

She claims to have also learned that corrupt officials in the Turkish and Israeli Ministries of Defense falsified end-user certificates on weapons purchased in the United States to enable sales to third countries not allowed access to the technology. Principal recipients include the five "Stans" in central Asia—Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan.

Furthermore, Edmonds says that former House speaker Dennis Hastert and at least two other congressmen were investigated as suspected recipients of illegal political contributions or even bribes from Turkish sources. Her website gallery includes photos of Congressmen Roy Blount, Dan Burton, and Tom Lantos, though she has not otherwise implicated any of the three directly.

A low-level contractor might seem poorly positioned to expose major breaches of national security, but the FBI

translators' pool, riddled with corruption and nepotism, was key to keeping these secrets from surfacing. Edmonds's claims that the section was infiltrated by translators who should never have received security clearances and who were deliberately failing to translate incriminating material are supported by the Justice Department inspector general investigation and by an FBI internal investigation, which concluded that she had been fired after making "valid complaints." One translator, Melek Can Dickerson, who had worked for three Turkish front organizations under investigation—she failed to reveal this when applying for employment—allegedly stamped many documents of interest "not pertinent," removed classified documents from FBI premises, and forged signatures on classified documents relating to 9/11 detainees. An Urdu translator was the daughter of a Pakistani Embassy employee who worked for Gen. Mahmoud Ahmad, the head of the Pakistani intelligence service who is accused of authorizing a \$100,000 wire transfer to Mohammed Atta's Dubai bank account immediately before 9/11. The Justice Department IG report confirmed Edmonds's charge that translators' section managers issued a go-slow order shortly after the terrorist attacks to create an artificial backlog that would justify an increase in budget and manpower. Those managers are reportedly still in place. Some have been promoted.

Edmonds's revelations have attracted corroboration in the form of anonymous letters apparently written by FBI employees. There have been frequent reports of FBI field agents being frustrated by the premature closure of cases dealing with foreign spying, particularly when those cases involve Israel, and the State Department has frequently intervened to shut down investigations based on "sensitive for-

eign diplomatic relations." One such anonymous letter, the veracity of which cannot be determined, cites transcripts of wiretaps involving Marc Grossman and a Turkish Embassy official between August and December 2001, described above, in which Grossman warned the Turk that Brewster Jennings was a CIA cover company. If the allegation can be documented from FBI files, the exposure of the Agency cover mechanism took place long before journalist Robert Novak outed the company in his column on Valerie Plame in 2003. The anonymous informant conveniently provides the FBI file number containing the transcripts of the recorded conversations: FBI Washington Field Office, Counterintelligence Division, Turkish Unit File 203A-WF-210023. According to the source, the FBI also recorded a subsequent conversation in which a Turkish official contacted the Pakistani Embassy to inform an ISI officer of Grossman's warning. The FBI also reportedly informed the CIA of the Grossman conversations to determine if there was any "conflict of interest," presumably to determine if the CIA was running its own operation that might be compromised as a result of the phone tap.

Curiously, the states-secrets gag order binding Edmonds, while put in place by DOJ in 2002, was not requested by the FBI but by the State Department and Pentagon—which employed individuals she identified as being involved in criminal activities. If her allegations are frivolous, that order would scarcely seem necessary. It would have been much simpler for the government to marginalize her by demonstrating that she was poorly informed or speculating about matters outside her competency. Under the Bush administration, the security gag order has been invoked to cover up incompetence or illegality, not to protect national security. It has recently been used to conceal the illegal wiretaps of

the warrantless surveillance program, the allegations of torture and the CIA's rendition program, and to shield the telecom industry for its collaboration in illegal eavesdropping.

Both Senators Grassley and Leahy, a Republican and a Democrat, who interviewed her at length in 2002, attest to Edmonds's believability. The Department of Justice inspector general investigation into her claims about the translations unit and an internal FBI review confirmed most of her allegations. Former FBI senior counterintelligence officer John Cole has independently confirmed her report of the presence of Pakistani intelligence service penetrations within the FBI translators' pool.

Edmonds wasn't angling to become a media darling. She would have preferred to testify under oath before a congressional committee that could offer legal protection and subpoena documents and witnesses to support her case. She claims that a number of FBI agents would be willing to testify, though she has not named them.

Prior to 2006, Congressman Henry Waxman of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee promised Edmonds that if the Democrats gained control of Congress, he would order hearings into her charges. But following the Democratic sweep, he has been less forthcoming, failing to schedule hearings, refusing to take Edmonds's calls, and recently stonewalling all inquiries into the matter. It is generally believed that Waxman, a strong supporter of Israel, is nervous about exposing an Israeli lobby role in the corruption that Edmonds describes. It is also suspected that Waxman fears that the revelations might open a Pandora's box, damaging Republicans and Democrats alike.

Edmonds's critics maintain that she saw only a small part of the picture in a highly compartmentalized working

environment, that she was privy to only a fragment of a large operation to penetrate and disrupt the groups that have been stealing U.S. weapons technology. She could not have known operational details of what the FBI was doing and why.

That criticism is serious and must be addressed. If Edmonds was indeed seeing only part of a counterintelligence sting operation to entrap a nuclear network like that of A.Q. Khan, the government could now reveal as much in general terms, since any operation that might have been running in 2002 has long since wound down. Regarding her access to operational information, Edmonds's critics clearly do not understand the intimate relationship that develops between FBI and CIA officers and their translators. Operations run against a foreign target in languages other than English require an intensive collaboration between field officers and translators. The translators are invariably brought into the loop because it is up to them to guide the officers seeking to understand what the target, who frequently is double talking or attempting to conceal his meaning, is actually saying. That said, it should be conceded that Edmonds might sometimes have seen only a piece of the story, and those claims based on her own interpretation should be regarded with caution.

Another objection is that Edmonds would only have seen "raw intelligence" that does not provide nuance and does not really indicate whether someone is guilty. That argument has merit, and it is undeniable that many intercepted communications lack context. But it ignores the fact that someone recorded in the act of taking a bribe or interceding to have a suspect in a criminal investigation released is behaving with a certain transparency. One either takes money or does not. There is very little interpretation that can change that reality.

Sibel Edmonds makes a number of accusations about specific criminal

behavior that appear to be extraordinary but are credible enough to warrant official investigation. Her allegations are documentable: an existing FBI file should determine whether they are accurate. It's true that she probably knows only part of the story, but if that part is correct, Congress and the Justice Department should have no higher pri-

ority. Nothing deserves more attention than the possibility of ongoing national-security failures and the proliferation of nuclear weapons with the connivance of corrupt senior government officials. ■

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

After Bhutto

Did Pakistan's democratic prospects die with her?

By Jason Motlagh

IN THE BITTER DAYS since Benazir Bhutto was assassinated, commentators around the world have cried martyrdom. The lofty narrative can trace its arc back to the beginning of last year, when the possibility of a return from exile was first floated. She knew all along it might be a fatal decision. Yet on the apparent eve of the country's self-destruction, the great hope of secular democracy flew back to save Pakistan.

Fate seemed to be in gear. On Oct. 18, just days after her return, Bhutto barely escaped a suicide attack that killed more than 140 supporters of her Pakistan People's Party and gave President Pervez Musharraf pretext to declare a state of emergency. She dug in, emerging from house arrest to wage a robust campaign. "Bhutto is alive!" she proclaimed at rallies. But the specter of her father Zulifkar's untimely death never strayed, and late last month she was shot dead at a park in Rawalpindi where Pakistan's first prime minister met the same end. Tryst with destiny or not, Benazir Bhutto showed guts.

For millions of liberal Pakistanis, and U.S. strategic interests in the region, the prospect of a stable Pakistan has never

looked more distant. Bhutto's killing animates the Islamic radicals who control lawless tribal areas and terrorize cities. The military is up to its usual heavy-handed antics, and the U.S. has no more tricks up its sleeve. Elections are postponed amid rolling bouts of violence. The PPP, the country's largest party, has lost its defining symbol.

But has democracy? Peel back the Bhutto hagiography, and her record is hardly that of a secular savior. She may have looked the part and recited the slogans, but Bhutto's years in power were tainted by an autocratic streak. Rampant corruption, mismanagement, idleness—these were the signposts of her regimes. Her party's failure to challenge the military rule, confront the burgeoning extremist groups, or champion the underclass among whom they have steadily gained purchase helped shape Pakistan into the geopolitical time bomb it is today.

The pressures did not build up overnight. They are a function of decades of lackluster governance, and Bhutto's time in power amounted to more of the same. During her first stint as prime minister, from 1988-90, she was unable to pass any significant legislation before

being deposed on allegations of corruption. Despite repeated campaign pledges to improve the lot of the rural poor, in power she became a patron of the privileged. Pakistan's education and health-care systems remained near the bottom of global indexes; justice eluded most Pakistanis outside the military and landed elites.

During her tenure, Pakistan's notorious secret service, the ISI, began cultivating the Taliban, a then obscure Islamic fundamentalist movement. Ironically, it was formed to combat abusive government. Throughout the 1990s, a host of other *jihadi* groups received arms and training from the agency, waging proxy wars from Kandahar to Kashmir. Hard-line madrassas in the tribal borderlands manufactured zealots for hire.

The Pakistani military has always operated from the shadows. But the popular mandate that swept Bhutto into office for a second term might have given her a chance to bring the army's ranks under the heel of civilian rule. Instead, Islamist causes benefited greatly from the corruption that came to define Bhutto's stewardship. In 1995, Transparency International named Pakistan one of the world's three most corrupt countries. Both Bhutto and her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, were charged with laundering some \$1.5 billion through Swiss bank accounts. Charges against her were later dropped, though they still stand against Zardari. Yet in her will, Bhutto chose him to wear her party's mantle—another sign of the dynastic tendencies that have alienated much of the underclass.

Bhutto's allegiance, however, could be the first casualty when her authority was challenged. Her brother Mir Murtaza tried to wrest away leadership of the PPP in 1993, only to be killed in a police shoot-out near the family home. His wife and daughter believe that Benazir tacitly approved. It was no secret that during her reign government

death squads abducted scores of political rivals who disappeared for good. The brutality of her regime earned the condemnation of human-rights groups such as Amnesty International.

It is hard not to admire Bhutto's courage in trading the safety of exile in London and Dubai for the myriad dangers of Pakistan. Yet true to form, the circumstances surrounding Bhutto's return are murky. When Musharraf deported her archrival and democratically elected prime minister, Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League to Saudi Arabia, she was silent. In the weeks before her return, she voiced no solidarity with the lawyers protesting Musharraf's manipulation of the Supreme Court—the perfect opportunity to make a bold opening statement against dictatorship. It later became clear that this silence was intended to accommodate an awkward U.S.-brokered power-sharing deal with the general himself. That seems a long time ago.

Benazir Bhutto might have gone on to become prime minister for the third time. The United States saw Bhutto—Western-educated and well known, with a staunch power base among the moderate elite—as a last-ditch chance and midwived her homecoming so she could serve as premier under Musharraf. The goal was twofold: to legitimize the president's rule, and by extension, the military regime and to secure a toehold for democratic interests, however shallow.

Bhutto's assassination has sparked unrest that could worsen over the next few weeks. The elections have been rescheduled for mid-February. This delay has worked in favor of Musharraf and the generals, who don't want to test their popularity at the ballot box.

In recent media reports, senior U.S. officials have described the Pakistani military as devious and unreliable. These statements were accompanied by a reduction of defense aid, a sensitive spot

since almost a quarter of the country's annual military budget comes from the United States. Without a popularly backed leader to do its bidding, Washington now appears less equipped to coax the military into fulfilling its strategic designs. This takes on new significance with thousands of American troops next door in Afghanistan, where the future is haunted by a powerful insurgency largely supported by allies in Pakistan.

Still more sobering is the prospect of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands. The world's only Muslim nuclear power, Pakistan has enough nuclear material for about 60 bombs, according to the International Panel on Fissile Materials. The military says there is nothing to fear, insisting that safeguards to protect its nuclear arsenals, spread throughout the country, are up to Western standards. But the influence of rogue players deep within military intelligence—some with known sympathies for Islamist causes—makes these claims questionable.

Theories continue to swirl that elements within the military-intelligence complex engaged a proxy to kill Bhutto. The usual suspects include al-Qaeda and the Taliban, along with several lesser-known *jihadi* groups. Before her death, Bhutto said that President Musharraf would be responsible—directly or indirectly—were she to be killed.

Either way, the U.S. administration's strategy of propping up President Musharraf at any cost has ramped up anti-Americanism to an all-time high, pushing homegrown partners of all stripes into harm's way. Benazir Bhutto's association with America may have sealed her fate. Pakistan could be next. ■

Jason Motlagh is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who has covered conflicts throughout the region. He previously worked as an editor on the UPI foreign desk.

Honor Killing

Losing a war isn't as great a stain on a nation's soul as refusing to admit defeat.

By Paul Robinson

CAN DEFEAT BE HONORABLE? Can a nation admit to error without incurring disgrace? For many, the answer to both questions is clearly “no, never,” especially in matters of war.

Shakespeare, setting out the two sides of the argument in his play “Troilus and Cressida,” shows us ancient Troy, left holding the poisoned prize of Helen while the Greeks decimate the Trojan army to repossess her. The Trojan hero Hector exclaims, “We have lost so many tenths of ours, to guard a thing not ours nor worth to us, had it our name, the value of one ten. What merit's in that reason which denies the yielding of her up?” He urges his compatriots to return Helen to the Greeks: “she is not worth what she doth cost the holding.” But they reject his advice. Instead, they follow his brother Troilus's counsel: “there can be no evasion to blench from this, and to stand firm by honor; We turn not back the silks upon the merchant when we have soiled them. ... O theft more base, that we have stol'n what we do fear to keep.” They fight on, and Troy falls.

Debating the Iraq War in New Hampshire, presidential hopefuls Ron Paul and Mike Huckabee re-fought eerily similar ground. Playing the warrior Hector, Paul told his Republican colleague, “When we make a mistake, it is the obligation of the people ... not to continue the mistake. ... We have lost over 5,000 Americans over there in Afghanistan and Iraq, plus the civilians killed. ...

What do we have to pay to save face? All we're doing is saving face.”

But like Troilus, Huckabee was having none of it. He stated, “When I was a little kid, if I went into a store with my mother, she had a simple rule for me. If I picked something off the shelf of the store and I broke it, I bought it.” “Whether or not we should have gone to Iraq is a discussion the historians can have, but we're there,” he continued. “We've got a responsibility to the honor of this country and to the honor of every man and woman who has served in Iraq and ever served in our military to not leave them with anything less than the honor they deserve.”

Who is right? Is there more honor in changing course or in persevering in a misguided cause? Ancient Rome, which believed itself to have been founded by survivors of the sack of Troy, provides illuminating answers.

In Rome's shining Republican era, victory certainly brought glory, but as the historian Carlin A. Barton writes in the book *Roman Honor*, “the Romans did not stigmatize defeat; rather they prided themselves on their ability to bear it with equanimity.” The records show that generals who lost battles fared no worse in elections than those who won them. Many a defeated general won the highest government posts, those of consul and praetor.

What really mattered was not whether you were defeated but how you handled it. Did you despair, or did you take it on the chin and show fortitude?

The former was dishonorable; the latter showed true Roman grit.

The Romans took this to what we might consider impossible lengths. They normally mitigated their severely moralistic outlook with a dose of expediency, but on occasion they would go so far as to reverse their martial successes in order to preserve their honor. So it was, according to Polybius, that in 270 BC, after Roman troops unjustly seized the city of Rhegium, the Senate “sent an army which laid siege to Rhegium, retook the city, and expelled the guilty troops.” The object, wrote Polybius, “was to restore, so far as possible, the good name of Rome.” Then in 172 BC, the Senate restored freedom to a tribe of Ligurians, whom the consul Caius Cicerius had attacked without good reason. Another historian, Livy, records that in 170 BC, after the praetor Lucius Hortensius had launched an unprovoked assault on the city of Abdera, beheaded its leaders, and sold the remaining inhabitants into slavery, “The Senate regarded this as a disgraceful proceeding and they made the same decree in the case of the Abderites that they had made the previous year in the case of the Coronaeans,” namely “that the Senate considered the attack upon Abdera as utterly unjustifiable, and demanded that search should be made for all who were enslaved in order that they might be set free.”

Today the idea that a government might announce that it had waged an

unjust war, apologize, and withdraw its troops from the lands they had no right to occupy seems unthinkable. Unlike the Romans, the American public elects only victorious generals, such as Andrew Jackson, Ulysses Grant, and Dwight Eisenhower. Honor is measured by results, not character.

This dynamic creates strong incentives to refuse to admit defeat or error on the political stage. The frequent justification of the refusal is couched in instrumental reasoning: such admissions are said to damage the nation's honor, thereby weakening its deterrent reputation and leaving it more vulnerable to external threat.

This argument misunderstands the nature of honor. In academic jargon, honor is primordial rather than instrumental—above all, it is about feeling good about ourselves. We seek it as an end in its own right rather than because of tangible advantages it may bring. As J.G. Peristiany, one of the foremost scholars on the subject, writes, “Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgment of that worth.” Somebody concerned with his honor acts as he does either to win the praise of others (or

at the very least to avoid their contempt) or to live up to his own sense of what is right. In either case, he hopes not to further his material interests but rather to feel himself to be a person of worth.

This is a crucial conclusion. People calling for war on grounds of national honor may convince themselves that there are instrumental reasons for doing so, but in truth, their motivations are more emotional. They want to fight

ably within the context of his own group—honor among thieves, as the saying goes.

We should ask those who talk about honor to specify more clearly with which virtues they associate honor, and why those virtues should override other considerations. When we do this, we see that those who cite honor as a reason for fighting generally interpret it very narrowly in terms of strength. Surrender is

FIGHTING WITHOUT PURPOSE OR A REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS MERELY OUT OF A FEAR OF LOOKING WEAK IS NEITHER STRONG NOR COURAGEOUS, BUT RECKLESS AND THUS NOT VIRTUOUS AT ALL.

because the alternative—giving in and admitting error—will make them feel weak and thus worthless. Put this way, fighting (and killing) for the sake of honor suddenly seems less justifiable.

Furthermore, honor is socially grounded. It exists because all societies wish to flourish, and so they reward (i.e. honor) those who succeed, in the hope of encouraging others to do likewise. At the same time, societies recognize that certain virtues are conducive to success, and so they honor the display of those virtues even when they are accompanied by failure, again in the hope of encouraging emulation. With time, these values become internalized, and individuals obey them not solely because they hope to win rewards but also because they wish to live up to their own sense of what is right and wrong.

What matters here is what the society considers virtuous in terms of its own goals. In his 2006 study, *Honor: a History*, James Bowman notes, “honor depends on the honor group.” But what is honorable for members of one group may be considered dishonorable by members of another. The tribesman or mafia member who kills another in an act of revenge is acting perfectly honor-

seen as shameful because it implies weakness. But there are, of course, many virtues other than strength. It may be true that ending a war without victory reveals a lack of strength, but if the war is unjust and cannot be won, publicly accepting that fact also furthers justice and demonstrates wisdom, self-control, and honesty, all major elements of a nation's “soft power.”

And even strength, to be virtuous, must be allied to prudence. Fighting without purpose or a reasonable chance of success merely out of a fear of looking weak is neither strong nor courageous, but reckless and thus not virtuous at all.

The great Roman orator Cicero understood this well. “We should never acquire a reputation for cowardice by avoiding dangers which should be faced,” he wrote, “but we should particularly avoid that most stupid of all courses of action in committing ourselves unnecessarily to a dangerous position.”

Unfortunately, the era in which Cicero lived saw a significant change in attitudes towards honor. As late as 70 BC, Lucius Gellius Poplicola and Cnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Clodianus could get themselves elected as censors despite having been defeated two years previ-



ously by an insurgency of slaves led by Spartacus. A few years later, the voters would not have accepted them. According to Barton, the last decades of the first century BC witnessed an “increasing admiration for a cult of victory.” Heroes of self-sacrifice were replaced by men who were “not prepared to lose.” As a result, honor lost its association with virtue and became ever more associated with utilitarian values. Power shifted from the Senate to the generals, in effect from the legislative to the executive arm of government.

There is a lesson here that the appearance obsessed would do well to heed. As long as the Romans recognized the possibility of honor in defeat, they held on to their freedoms, but once they came to believe that victory was all that mattered, the republic (like Troy before it) collapsed. The Romans won their battles overseas, but in the process they lost what mattered to them at home.

In that New Hampshire debate, Huckabee almost grasped the point. “We’re losing elections,” Ron Paul warned him, “and we’re going down next year if we don’t change it.” “Even if we lose elections,” replied the former Arkansas governor, “we should not lose our honor, and that is more important to the Republican Party.”

When it comes to his party, it seems that Huckabee does indeed see that defeat with honor can be prized above victory without it. He should reflect on the foreign-policy implications of his words as he moves forward in his quest for the presidency. ■

Paul Robinson is an associate professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa and the author of Military Honour and the Conduct of War: from Ancient Greece to Iraq (Routledge 2006) and the Dictionary of International Security (Polity, 2008).

Dead Wrong

Selling out leaves one neocon poorer for ideas.

By Daniel McCarthy

WHEN DAVID FRUM’S first and best book, *Dead Right*, was published in 1994, William F. Buckley Jr. blurbed it as “the most refreshing ideological experience in a generation.” That was a bit much, but even Frum’s critics might agree that *Dead Right* was a crisply written indictment of everything its author disliked about conservatism in the early ’90s. “Optimists” like Jack Kemp and “Moralists” like Bill Bennett occasionally irked him; “Nationalists” like Pat Buchanan he hated with a passion. But passion wasn’t the only thing fueling *Dead Right*. Its author hit the mark with at least some of his analysis and predictions: “conservatives plainly do not feel the same zeal for minimal government they once did,” he wrote, noting that “social conservatism is potentially more popular than economic conservatism. But severed from economic conservatism, social conservatism too easily degenerates into mere posturing.” The next 12 years of Republican rule on Capitol Hill would bear out both points.

Frum’s latest book, *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again* is also getting lavish praise from his friends, but this one is much less likely to win respect from critics, not least because “conservatism that can win again” turns out not to look much like conservatism at all. Among the bold ideas Frum offers conservatives: give up on tax cuts, tone down the talk about abortion and stem cells, and get ready for war with Iran. The bulk of the conservative agenda falls by the wayside, but war remains: “American voters need to know: Republicans will never allow a rogue nation like

mullah-ruled Iran to gain nuclear weapons,” he writes. “Whatever it takes to prevent that outcome, we will do. Whatever it takes. That is what we stand for as a party.” Try to read that without hearing the Beach Boys’ “Barbara Ann” as sung by John McCain.

Conservatives reading *Comeback* might wonder what it would profit them to gain the world—or at least retain the White House—and lose their principles. Where Frum is concerned, however, that question may be moot: he appears never to have had any principles. What he does have is *modus operandi*. From his undergraduate days at Yale to his “Unpatriotic Conservatives” screed of 2003 to his postings today in his National Review Online “diary,” Frum has advanced himself by tearing down traditional conservatives, often by assailing high-profile targets who are nonetheless powerless to damage his career.

As a columnist for the Yale *Daily News* in the early ’80s, he joined his liberal editors in a campaign to urge the university to seize control of the *Yale Literary Magazine*, at the time owned by a 25-year-old alumnus named Andrei Navrozov. According to the *New York Times*, Navrozov had acquired “the financially troubled magazine” in 1978 and “turned the modest undergraduate journal into a handsome journal with a national circulation.” Frum and his allies said they simply wanted the *Lit* returned to the undergraduates. But Navrozov detected a political subtext to their efforts, the existence of which the *Times*, in its coverage of the *Lit* controversy in 1981, confirmed. “Privately, these

same people talk about Mr. Navrozov's politics," the newspaper reported, "his 'raucus, antiliberal, new cold war' politics."

Navrozov described the magazine's orientation as "against totalitarianism and pro-freedom" and expressed the ambition to make the *Lit* resemble the *London Poetry Review*. He still occasionally published Yale undergraduates. But that did not satisfy Frum or *Daily News* editor Jacob Levich, who wrote a joint letter to the *Times* denouncing the newspaper's story and expressing the hope that "all Yale alumni who remember the *Lit* as it was" would press the university administration to take control of the publication. This prompted a letter to the *Times* from a 1977 Yale alumnus, Richard Brookhiser:

Whatever its past glories, by the mid-70's the *Lit* had become moribund. Its current editors have at least made it interesting again. That's one reason I write for it now. I can't speak for Lewis Lapham, William F. Buckley Jr. or Philip Larkin, but that may be one of their reasons too.

Like Navrozov, Frum was a professed anti-communist. A Yale near-contemporary, John Zmirak recalls, "Frum had made himself well-known among the amazingly intolerant leftist students of early 1980s Yale by loudly espousing Reaganite foreign and budgetary policy." That notwithstanding, "there was a sense" that attacking the *Lit* "was a good career move," an unnamed ally of Navrozov's told *Toronto Life* in 2001, "a sense—and a resentment—that [Frum] was trying to establish himself as the acceptable conservative voice on campus—not with other conservatives, but with the powers that be." The record of Frum's career lends credence to that interpretation.

Frum was born in 1960 in Toronto to Murray and Barbara Frum—he a dentist, she a Canadian television personality.

After Yale, Frum attended Harvard Law School before returning to Toronto in 1987 to become associate editor of *Saturday Night*, which was bought by Conrad Black shortly before Frum started work there. From *Saturday Night* he moved to the *Wall Street Journal*, where he worked as an assistant editor. While at the *Journal*, Frum accepted the freelance assignment that would make his name: a 1991 cover story for *The American Spectator* attacking Pat Buchanan.

The article, "Conservative Bully Boy," described Buchanan as "everything couth conservatives want to escape" and took aim not just at Buchanan himself—then contemplating a run against George H.W. Bush for the 1992 Republican presidential nomination—but also at his paleoconservative and libertarian supporters, including Paul Gottfried, Murray Rothbard, and Thomas Fleming, among others. Frum accused Buchanan of "sly Jew-baiting"—so sly, evidently, that it slipped past Jewish intellectuals Rothbard and Gottfried, but not the ever vigilant Frum. And he defended neoconservatives against criticisms Buchanan had made: "There is in fact nothing particularly 'neoconservative' about the pro-internationalism, pro-immigration, pro-democracy ideological position Buchanan has set himself against," Frum insisted while attacking Buchanan's views on trade as at wider variance with conservative orthodoxy.

The hit on Buchanan earned Frum a book deal with *The New Republic's* imprint at Basic Books; indeed, Frum reused much of his material on Buchanan and the paleos for *Dead Right's* chapter on "Nationalists." He reprinted the Buchanan piece in full, along with other essays that had been reworked into *Dead Right* chapters in his second book, the 1996 essay collection *What's Right*. Frum had not yet triangulated his way toward environmentalism, one of the issues he embraces in

Comeback, but already he was a dedicated recycler. Readers who had seen his criticisms of paleos twice before would eventually see them again in "Unpatriotic Conservatives."

In 2000, Frum published an original book that was not devoted to attacking anyone to his right. It was called *How We Got Here: The 70s—The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)*. The book, which pins on the 1970s—a lousy decade, to be sure—evils conservatives more typically associate with the 1960s, received scant notice. The uninitiated might suppose that *How We Got Here* read like a book written by a paleoconservative: it's a curmudgeonly, joyless thing. In fact, that isn't how paleoconservatives actually write, as anyone familiar with the prose of Rothbard, Bill Kauffman, or Chilton Williamson can attest. At age 40, neoconservatism's brightest young thing seemed to have grown old.

Not that *How We Got Here* was devoid of insight: ironically, given his later role in the Bush White House, some of Frum's best material in this book was about the social consequences of war and militarism. He framed the 1970s in the shadow of World War II and Vietnam, suggesting, "The turmoil of the 1970s should be understood ... as the rebellion of an unmilitary people against institutions and laws formed by a century of war and the preparation for war." He acknowledged what he thought of as socially useful qualities in war and preparation for war: "War inspires faith in the political leaders who bring victory," he wrote, "war reinforces sex roles," and "war gives rise too to feels of spiritual equality." But he also wrote that war "demands taxation, regulation, and control; hierarchy, centralization, and secrecy; conscription, obedience, and authority—none of them easily reconciled with the American constitutional scheme or the American

national character.” Frum would soon be denouncing paleoconservatives for writing lines just like that.

He pivoted away from the critical and commercial disappointment of *How We Got Here* into a career as speechwriter for the newly elected President Bush in 2001. Out of his one-year stint at the White House would come another book, *The Right Man*—not the most frank of memoirs. Its opening chapter describes the lengths to which Bush’s chief speechwriter, Michael Gerson, had to go to recruit the reluctant Canadian. While being interviewed for the job, Frum later wrote, “I had to keep my attention focused on the business at hand: explaining to him [Gerson] why I believed I was unsuited to the job he was offering me.” Marci McDonald, in her comprehensive 2001 *Toronto Sun* profile of Frum, had a very different take: “Certainly, he appears to have wanted the job,” she wrote. “During [2000’s] Republican convention, he sought out Mike Gerson ... and devoted an entire column to him that might have been mistaken for an audition.” Reflecting on Frum’s transition from media to government, his former editor at *Saturday Night*, John Fraser, told McDonald, “he’d love being at the centre of power. He was never really a journalist; the journalism was in the aid of a cause. He was a zealot.” But a zealot for what cause?

Frum had long been known as a fiscal conservative—indeed, his books showed at least a casual acquaintance with the work of Ludwig von Mises—and his White House title was “special assistant to the president for economic speechwriting.” But Frum didn’t make his mark as a free-market man in a Big Government administration. Instead, his tenure with Bush is best remembered for a foreign-policy slogan, arguably the most pernicious one of the Bush years: “axis of evil.” Asked by Gerson in December 2001, “Can you sum up in a sentence or two our best case for going

Israel’s Sept. 6 bombing of a building in Syria continues to be shrouded in secrecy, but both American analysts and United Nations investigators now believe that the entire incident was the result of poor intelligence compiled by the Israelis and accepted by a gullible White House. The follow-up investigation has been hampered by the Bush administration’s absolute refusal to co-operate. The U.S. government presumably knows what occurred and why, but has not been willing to share that information with the intelligence community.

The information is reported to be so tightly held within the administration that only a handful of senior officials and congressional committee chairmen have been briefed. One might expect that a huge error involving an attack on another country that posed no immediate threat to the United States would result in an immediate leak, but the involvement of Israel has produced unusual restraint.

The analysts and UN investigators have concluded definitively that the bombed Syrian building was in no way connected with any identifiable nuclear program. No nuclear materials were released into the air after the bombing, and the configuration of the building does not suggest that it was designed for either nuclear processing or even research.

Since Israel is technically still at war with Syria and has not previously been shy about staging air attacks, the mystery remains as to why there is the continuing veil of secrecy. Sources in Washington believe it is because the United States was actively involved in the planning and execution of the operation, which could reasonably be construed as an act of war against Damascus. One source reports that the U.S. had special operations soldiers on the ground in the vicinity of the bombing to move in and obtain incriminating material. We may have also assisted in the actual targeting, possibly using laser pinpointing. The soldiers would have infiltrated Syria from nearby Turkey, which also explains why Turkey did not protest when its airspace was violated by the Israeli planes that also dropped their empty fuel tanks inside Turkish territory. Another source notes that the Israelis appear to have believed that North Korean technicians were present at the site and might have been killed in the bombing, placing at risk the recently concluded nuclear disarmament agreement with Pyongyang should it become known that the U.S. was involved.

Another well-placed source speculates that the Israelis got everything wrong in their collection of intelligence and analysis. They incorrectly assumed that material and technicians coming from North Korea in support of a Syrian missile program were instead involved in nuclear technology transfer. When the White House was informed of the development, it opted for absolute secrecy and therefore failed to review the information with U.S. intelligence, leading to a misguided joint assault on Syria that could easily have been avoided.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

to war with Iraq?" Frum drew up an Iraq memo that was incorporated into the president's 2002 State of the Union address, along with the phrase "axis of hate," later refined by Gerson into its more familiar formulation. So proud was Frum's wife Danielle Crittenden that she sent around an e-mail to friends boasting of her husband's authorship. Word got out, and as Frum prepared to leave the administration in February 2002, Robert Novak reported that he had been fired for his wife's indiscretion. In *The Right Man*, Frum says this wasn't true; he left because "a war presidency had decreasing need for an economic speechwriter." Maybe so, though even then Bush and Karl Rove had plans to privatize Social Security. Surely they would need a persuasive economic speechwriter before too long?

But free-market economics had only ever been the lowest common denominator between Frum and the conservative movement. None of his books to date had been a work of economics, and his next one, *An End to Evil*, co-authored with Richard Perle, would not be one either. "Axis of evil" had earned him a reputation as a prominent hawk. *An End to Evil* reinforced it. Before publishing that book, however, Frum returned to the subject that had served him so well in the past: the need to purge the Right of paleoconservatives. On March 25, 2003, one day before the Iraq War began, *National Review* published online the latest iteration of Frum's favorite theme. This time the bull of excommunication was called "Unpatriotic Conservatives."

To the old enemies' list Frum had drawn up in "Conservative Bully Boy" and *Dead Right*—Pat Buchanan, Thomas Fleming, Lew Rockwell—he added a fresh litany of foes: *TAC* editors Scott McConnell and Taki Theodoracopulos, supply-side guru Jude Wanniski, and recent nemesis Robert Novak. He cast a net so wide that there was only one thing

that the whole motley assortment of libertarians and conservatives on his hit list agreed upon: all of them, except for historian Stephen Tonsor, opposed the Iraq War. And Tonsor only made the cut because Frum chose to pad his indictment of antiwar conservatives with filler about the domestic neo-paleo squabbles of the '80s and '90s. The war furnished a pretext for settling old scores.

"The antiwar conservatives," Frum wrote, "have made common cause with the left-wing and Islamist antiwar movements in this country and in Europe." He offered no evidence for this assertion. Specific charges Frum leveled were equally spurious: Robert Novak, a particular focus of the piece—and of Frum's animus—stood accused of "terror denial" for disputing Condoleezza Rice's claim that Hezbollah was a greater menace than al-Qaeda; he was guilty of "espousing defeatism" for writing that the CIA "is viewed by its Capitol Hill overseers as incapable of targeting bin Laden," which, of course, it was. Frum insinuated, Frum misrepresented, Frum quoted out of context; the one thing he didn't do was grapple with his enemies' arguments. Truth was not his goal—only persecution.

He has continued in the same vein ever since, in September 2004 accusing Pat Buchanan of "opposition to military action against Osama bin Laden" in 2001 and "repeatedly predict[ing] doom and disaster" in the Afghan War, though in fact Buchanan said at the time, "The Taliban have to be overthrown" and predicted U.S. success.

Frum's subsequent spinning of "Unpatriotic Conservatives" has been as disingenuous as the piece itself. "The article is often described as an attack on critics of the Iraq war," Frum wrote in his online diary last July. "In fact, the article opened by welcoming disagreement on the Iraq War as 'reasonable, indeed valuable.'" But when pressed to mention an antiwar

conservative he doesn't consider unpatriotic, Frum has only ever given one name: Heather Mac Donald, a friend and former colleague from the Manhattan Institute. Frum describes her as "a noted Iraq skeptic," but before the war began, the only place her opposition to it had been "noted" was the March 3, 2003 issue of the *New York Observer*, in which she describes criticizing the war from the right as "a futile gesture" and alludes to a friend at the *Wall Street Journal* who was "anti-war and he won't even mention it, because there the unanimity is so strong." The only antiwar voices Frum is willing to tolerate, it seems, are those that remain silent.

In *Comeback*, Frum concludes that for conservatism to survive, "we must rediscover the most fundamental of all conservative truths: In a world of flux, the only way to conserve is to change." But Frum's own views on the desirability of the United States playing policeman to the world have not changed a jot since the disaster of the Iraq War, though Frum acknowledges that "democratization" is now a word in bad odor. Still, he believes "the US needs to expand its military police reserve capabilities and build up a US Office of Peacekeeping." *Comeback* calls on conservatives to rein in their traditional opposition to higher taxes and soften their stand on social issues. What's not negotiable is commitment to war and nation-building.

Fourteen years after *Dead Right*, Frum, who built his career on denouncing anyone to his right, has yet to develop any positive philosophy of his own. His ideas, and his prose, have long since calcified, and all David Frum is left with, as *Comeback* shows, is an abiding faith in American empire and a unabating hatred for those with firmer conservative convictions than his own. ■

Daniel McCarthy writes from Wilmington, Delaware.

Shotgun Offense

Who wins when football mania and heartland values collide?
The Grizzlies, of course.

By Jim Pittaway

BIG CHANGES ARE AFOOT in Grizzly country. The reintroduction of predators into our wilderness has reached a point where hunting season is no longer a one-way street. Hunters win most of the time, but the wildlife gets in more licks every year.

As goes the wilderness, so goes society up here. In a parallel of sublime but sad irony, the “Grizzlies” of the University of Montana and the “Bobcats” of Montana State are systematically introducing predatory humans into civil society—with eerily similar results. The difference is that the viciousness of bears and mountain cats is part of our heritage. The feral ferocity of these new human predators is something against which we have no defense.

This truth became clear when the bus bringing the ever victorious Montana Grizzlies football team back to Missoula was met by police who took into custody a running back, a defensive end, and a cornerback. Were they dealing pot out of their dorms? Steroids? Was it vandalism? Maybe a he-said-she-said frat party assault? These things happen around colleges. But this was no such crime.

Six automatic-weapon-toting men in ski masks had kicked in the door of a residence, duct taped, tasered, pistol whipped, and tortured the occupants before taking an undisclosed amount of cash and marijuana, trashing the place, and taking off. This was crime by Compton Rules, known as a “rip,” with an

emphasis on numbers, weaponry, brutality, and speed. In this trusting place, where people don’t lock doors and women leave purses in cars, the introduction of Compton Rules criminality promises significant changes to the way we live.

Liberal white guilt and sports mania have come together to create a perfect storm that may sweep away the innocence and overwhelm the bonds of trust and camaraderie that have made Missoula such a wonderful place to live. For this particular crime is hardly the first perpetrated by football players recruited out of a gang-banger culture that is alien to anything around here.

Of the six perpetrators, four have been arrested, along with a seventh, a white wannabe who apparently bought gloves and masks but did not attend the actual festivities. Two others are still at large, including a mysterious black male unknown except for his street name, “Dirty,” which I happen to believe. The other young man, another cornerback, is more familiar to local news watchers.

The fugitive Mr. Freeman came to prominence last summer, when he and another Griz cornerback, Mr. Wilson, were involved in an execution-style murder back home in LA, presumably after both had finished their exams and returned for a hard-earned vacation. At first, local news did not report that a starting cornerback on our lionized football team had been charged with murder. We would probably never have

heard about it had someone in the Missoula PD not blown the athletic department’s attempts to cover this all up after LAPD detectives came looking for Freeman. The gridiron star wasn’t formally charged and evidently stuck around, only to be charged a week later with assault outside a bar. The athletic department could do nothing to keep this incident out of the papers because he had become so well known. Those charges were later dropped after the complainant, perhaps recognizing—as I would—that the cops aren’t very good at getting a net around Mr. Freeman, decided to withdraw the allegation.

There are other reports of sexual assaults, pistol whippings, and armed robberies perpetrated by recruits playing by Compton Rules. The situation is arguably worse at Montana State, where late last year police busted a large and very violent drug cartel virtually run out of the athletic department. At MSU, they have actually had execution-style murders to go along with the home invasions, witness intimidation, beatings, and rapes. Bozeman is a much smaller town, more vulnerable than Missoula, and there is little evidence that the guys missed by the cops there, like Freeman and Dirty here, are not still hanging around.

At least MSU was forced to clean out its athletic department. The football coach and his staff were fired. This was probably because a white assistant

coach was caught running his own drug-dealing enterprise. At any rate, the contrast between MSU's response and what we are getting here is chilling. It's important too, because Missoula is by no means atypical of that more civil and, yes, innocent, heartland of America where the social pathologies of the Megalopolis are yet unknown. Nevertheless, athletic contests are wildly overvalued and foolish ideas have stripped the community of its defenses.

show signs of trauma from beatings and sexual assaults they claim have been perpetrated by members of the UM football team. The athletic department's ability to squash the murder story is just an indication of its power. Having a beef with the Griz is an easy way to become unpopular. People find themselves subjected to all kinds of pressure to not make trouble for "student athletes," who are viewed as contributing something vitally, almost metaphysically, important

do much about this may be related to the refusal of the police and sheriff departments to acknowledge the steroid problem in law enforcement. The police used to require a pre-employment drug test, but no longer do. City officials say the union won't allow it. If you were a local cop who was regularly expected to subdue buffed young men in the throes of violent psychotic breaks, wouldn't you be tempted to try to level the playing field just a bit? Denial of the steroid problem, which originates in a refusal to face the realities of modern athletics, now extends to the very people we depend on for protection. I doubt this dreadful cycle is at all peculiar to our community. Adding organized groups of heavily armed urbanized criminals to this small-town mix may well be stressing local law enforcement beyond its capacity to function. We are now being forced to find out.

This reckoning began in 2002, when the current Griz coach, Bobby Hauck, was brought in from the staff at the University of Washington. Like his boss in Seattle, the infamous Rick Neuheisel, Hauck is a brassy, loud, win-at-any-cost, scorched-earth type of guy, who quickly demonstrated that Read's complex system had fried the wiring of his brain. After Hauck's inept debut season, the Griz ranks were suddenly filled out with junior college transfers and "student athletes" who had gotten themselves booted out of Division I-A programs. That's how the Compton Rules crowd came to our town and found fresh meat.

We could probably deal with this were it not for the inane responses of our community leaders. Their first line of defense is the big lie. Of course everybody at the university was more shocked than Claude Raines when he discovered they were gambling at Rick's. Yet this line appears to be working with the Griz-maniacs, so why not just brazen out the lie, no matter how

COPS, DA'S, AND JUDGES, NOT TO MENTION NEWSPAPERS AND TELEVISION STATIONS ARE ALL COMPLICIT, BELIEVING WE HAVE AN ALMOST TRANSCENDENT STAKE IN HAVING A WINNING FOOTBALL TEAM.

When I came home in 1994, I was looking forward to Griz games. The team had a brilliant coach, Don Read, who did for Division I-AA football what Bill Walsh had done for the pros: put an unstoppable offense on the field that placed a premium on smarts and skill. This approach gave Read's young men an edge over rivals, who often relied on pure speed and strength. But Griz-mania had an unsettling edge. Fans displayed an unseemly passion, an inappropriate over-identification with their team. This had nothing to do with love of the game or appreciation of athletic contests. (This year, the Griz began their season with five straight home games, most against lower division patsies. Have you, kind reader, ever heard of such a thing?) The spectacle has been great for the local economy but has cost the community its sense of perspective. And in communities, just as in individuals, loss of perspective is a harbinger of disturbing consequences.

My practice as a therapist and my professional grapevine have put me in contact with some of these consequences. It is regrettably common for patients to

to this community. Medical and social service people understand that only the most egregious crimes can be pursued against team members. Griz stars get a pass on anything less than homicide, grand theft, or first-degree rape—and if you are going to take action, you'd better take care of your witnesses.

Cops, DA's, and judges, not to mention newspapers and television stations are all complicit, believing we have an almost transcendent stake in having a winning football team. As the steroid era dawned, the idea that it was a civic virtue to protect young men who public-health professionals knew were doping emerged as a serious public-security problem. It wasn't long before downtown Missoula on weekend nights became a dangerous place, especially if you look like a "hippie" or a "queer." We are told that the "gay bashing" problem in the downtown bars worsens year by year, but this has become code for increasingly frequent, brutal, and often fatal assaults that have far more to do with steroid-induced psychosis than bigotry.

The inability of our justice system to

preposterous? We are expected to believe that no one at the athletic department had any idea about the criminal histories and outstanding warrants on these new athletes. How could they? After all, Bobby Hauck worked his tail off so that this town could have a “championship caliber” football program. He supervises more than a 100 athletes. How is he supposed to know what every single one of them is doing at every given moment? And so on.

Then there are the minimizers. My favorite is George Dennison, president of the university and program-builder extraordinaire. As his personal “shock” and “pain” wear off, he comes up with the solution: get rid of the “bad apples,” he brays, but expand the “mentoring programs” to help the offenders “make better choices.” Apparently this educator believes that armed home invasion is a “poor behavioral choice” and mentoring is a suitable treatment plan for psy-

The local media, faced with the most important story since I have been in town, retreated into its customary shell, as it tends to do whenever a story has racial overtones. After the initial arrests and bail hearings and a spate of interviews with shocked people—who are responsible for this but couldn’t possibly have known or done anything—coverage was dropped. The concern shifted to how this mess broke out during rivalry week, with all praying that the players would be able to focus on what they needed to focus on, the Cats game on Saturday. Thank goodness Coach Hauck is strong and wise enough to keep their attention where it belongs.

People with the impiety to reflect on how they could have lived, worked, played, and traveled with automatic-weapon-toting homicidal maniacs without having a clue were not heard from. Nor can we raise the real questions: why,

are people who think having nests of armed psychopaths in our community is less important than having a winning football program. The majority pretend it isn’t really that disturbing—armed home invaders are “bad apples”—or reckon that this goes on everywhere anyway so why pick on the Griz? Many locals are ready to assassinate the character of anyone with the temerity to point out that young men raised by stressed grandmothers and violent video games, indoctrinated by antisocial rap lyrics and morally instructed by street gangs, are not likely to succeed in school or society.

This is a genuine controversy in our community, and those who live in reality and value peace and personal security are likely to lose the argument. To have leadership in higher education not only provide disingenuous and transparent justifications, but target support among the most irrational elements in the community in order to stifle criticism and evade responsibility amounts to nothing less than a betrayal of civilized society. It transcends the political failures so often noted by conservative critics.

“Bread and circuses” is a shopworn cliché, but evidence of this over-identification with sports teams, particularly football teams, is everywhere. We’re told that high-school football is a religion in Texas, and snigger when we hear of cheerleader moms murdering rivals. This “fantasy league” stuff pushed by all the networks must be pretty potent; they sure give it airtime. Does it make people feel like they’re actual participants, thus blurring the line between reality and fantasy even further? I can’t say that I’m entertained. I’ve found this football season, interesting as it has been, a somewhat rancid dish. ■

Jim Pittaway is a licensed psychotherapist who resides and practices in Missoula, Montana.

NO ONE IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM HAS SEEN FIT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE DAMAGE THEY HAVE DONE TO THIS COMMUNITY OR THE CAVALIER WAY THEY HAVE JEOPARDIZED CIVIL PEACE BY INTRODUCING PREDATORS INTO OUR MIDST.

chopaths. He sets a new standard for academic fools attempting to parse the real world. Or, perhaps, cynicism has gotten the better of him: he knows that, in the context of Griz-mania, the rubes will swallow just about anything as long as we beat the Cats. The chairlady of the Board of Regents takes the strawman route, bleating her great distress that the “bad apples” are sully the reputation of “the hundreds of fine student athletes in our system.” No one in the university system has seen fit to acknowledge the damage they have done to this community or the cavalier way they have jeopardized civil peace by introducing predators into our midst.

how, and by whom were those who did figure things out—I persist in believing there had to be some—deterred from bringing matters into the light of day? But that would bring us back to Bobby Hauck and his coaching staff. Doubting him, his motives, or his methods passes for heresy. Questions like that might cost us points in a football game.

It’s disturbing to see a substantial portion of the population of a sensible and civil place lose its perspective and sense of proportion to the extent we’ve seen here. Reality—who your neighbors are and how they behave—has been conflated with spectacle—a vicarious participation in a staged event. There really

Live Free or Die?

Many of the results from New Hampshire were surprising, but none was as disappointing as Ron Paul's fifth place showing. Coming off a decent 10-percent finish in

Iowa, where no one had expected Paul to do well, the campaign seemed poised to strike gold in a state filled with independent-minded, libertarian-leaning voters. Columnist Jim Pinkerton even hazarded a guess that Paul might win New Hampshire. Instead, he received just 8 percent of the vote.

In the end, Iowa rewarded the campaigns staffed by zealous activists, and New Hampshire punished those lacking careful preparation and professionalism. Where Paul won more votes with less effort and expenditure in Iowa than almost any other candidate, no other campaign missed a greater opportunity in the Granite State. In what should have been his natural constituency, Paul lagged behind every other competitive contender and was outpolled by the candidates for the nanny state (Huckabee) and the warfare state (Giuliani). Now Paul's grassroots rebellion seems stalled, flush with cash but bereft of electoral prospects.

Optimistic theories that pollsters were missing a mass of first-time voters turned out to be false. Instead, the home of the Free State Project and the birthplace of the "Constitutional President" opted for neither liberty nor the Constitution.

Some factors were frankly beyond the campaign's control. In a record-turnout primary, the impact of dissenting candidates in both parties was reduced. Two top-tier candidates attracted most of the independent voters in New Hampshire's open system, so there was more competition for these unaffiliated voters than

there had been in other cycles. Most frustrating for an antiwar conservative candidate, Paul only received the votes of 16 percent of those who disapproved of the war in Iraq, while a large number inexplicably went to John McCain, the most ardent advocate of the surge and a leading apologist for the disastrous war. In fact, four in ten McCain supporters had a favorable view of Ron Paul.

Where the other notable rebellious Republican candidate, Mike Huckabee, was able to tap into pre-existing networks of churches and homeschoolers to make up for his lack of organization and money, there are few ready-made support systems for antiwar constitutionalists. The idiosyncratic nature of Paul's campaign makes it an odd fit for most institutions and interest groups. Finally, FoxNews excluded Paul from its final debate on the Sunday before the election, which may have undermined his position among late-deciding voters.

This explains only so much. Paul's campaign infrastructure was poor, confirming the suspicion that a candidate who was an Internet sensation might not have the "ground game" needed to persuade and mobilize voters in a state famous for its tradition of retail politics. As *Reason's* Dave Weigel reported, Paul volunteers were late in coming to the state, and once there were slow to become effective campaigners. And in addition to a scatter-shot ad campaign, some of the Paul commercials were famously awful and amateurish. "Ron Paul, he's really catching on," a character in one ad asserted, as if he was

trying to convince himself as much as the audience.

The outlook for the campaign in the rest of the primary season is not encouraging. Paul won only 6 percent in Michigan, and polls just 5 percent in South Carolina. In state after state, he has some of the most unfavorable ratings of any Republican. While this is undoubtedly caused by relentless demonization in the Republican media, it also reflects the divide between roughly two-thirds of the party and Ron Paul on the war and foreign policy generally.

Still the campaign has the potential to be the start of a movement rather than an enthusiastic fad. Its mix of constitutionalism and cultural conservatism with hints of Jeffersonian populism is a powerful, appealing combination. It speaks to the 10-15 percent of Americans on the Right who are clamoring for representation, in addition to many more who have little confidence in our political system and have only recently learned of Paul's principles. In a hopeful sign for the future, Paul's support in New Hampshire, as in Iowa, came disproportionately from voters aged 18-29, among whom he finished third. In a generation that is turning away from the Republican Party in droves, Paul voters are among the young Americans moved in the other direction by a message of constitutional liberty. The principles of the Old Right are new again.

As a president from New Hampshire said in his Inaugural Address, "The great objects of our pursuit as a people are best to be attained by peace, and are entirely consistent with the tranquility and interests of the rest of mankind." As long as there are Americans who believe this, the Ron Paul Revolution will live on beyond 2008. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*There Will Be Blood*]

The Oilman Bowls Alone

By Steve Sailer

NO MOVIE OF 2007 sounded more promising than “There Will Be Blood,” which stars the titanic Daniel Day-Lewis in a loose adaptation of Upton Sinclair’s 1927 *roman-à-clef* about prospector Edward L. Doheny, *Oil!*

In 1893, Doheny sank the first oil well in Los Angeles, digging 155 feet by hand. His oil discoveries all over California and Mexico (where he employed a private army of 6,000), enabled him to give his son the most imposing house in California south of William Randolph Hearst’s San Simeon Greystone, a 55-room Beverly Hills mansion with a private bowling alley, where the last scene of “There Will Be Blood” was filmed.

During the Harding administration, however, Doheny, a Democrat (but an open-minded one), became entangled in the Teapot Dome scandal. After receiving a no-bid contract to drill on Navy lands, he sent his son with a “loan” of \$100,000 in cash to Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall.

Outraged, the muckraking socialist Sinclair wrote a verbose but well-researched novel about oil, “the black and cruel demon,” leavened with some surprisingly affectionate depictions of the old rascal. If Sinclair had waited two more years, though, he would have had

the perfect climax. In 1929, having been acquitted of conspiracy, Doheny was still facing trial on bribing Fall when his son and his son’s secretary, both potential witnesses, died at Greystone in a murder-suicide. Who had murdered whom? The police quickly blamed the secretary, and the newspapers went along.

The Doheny affair was not forgotten, however, by a Los Angeles oil industry executive named Raymond Chandler. When he drank himself out of a job in 1932, Chandler tried writing detective fiction. The ambiguous Greystone killings became the archetype for Philip Marlowe’s cases, with Doheny Sr. perhaps the inspiration for the dying General Sternwood who hires Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*.

It would be hard to go wrong with source material this vivid, and harder still with Daniel Day-Lewis as the oilman. This is only the eighth movie Day-Lewis has appeared in since he won the 1989 Best Actor Oscar for “My Left Foot.” There he played an angry Irish slum lad so disabled by cerebral palsy that he couldn’t speak, who became a famous painter and writer using the only part of his body he could control.

Day-Lewis claims he felt like a discriminated-against outsider growing up in England because of his half-Irish and half-Jewish ancestry. In reality, his Protestant Irish father, C. Day-Lewis, was Poet Laureate of England, while his Jewish grandfather, Sir Michael Balcon, was the head of England’s most beloved movie studio, Ealing, when Alec Guinness made his comedies. Day-Lewis’s combination of English privileged-class panache and American method-acting intensity has made him one of the most formidable of all contemporary screen presences.

And in the hands of the Bard of Studio City, writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson, maker of such memorable San Fernando Valley-obsessed films as “Boogie Nights” and “Punch-Drunk Love,” “There Will Be Blood” had the potential to displace “Chinatown” as the Southern California period masterpiece.

Despite a handful of great scenes, the strangely apolitical “There Will Be Blood” turns out to be just another movie about movies. Anderson entrances the critics with countless references to film-school staples such as “Citizen Kane.” For example, Day-Lewis’s mid-Atlantic accent is lifted from John Huston’s villainous tycoon in “Chinatown,” which in turn points to Huston’s classic about greedy prospectors, “Treasure of the Sierra Madre.” The ominous, annoying orchestral score by Radiohead guitarist Johnny Greenwood is nearly identical to György Ligeti’s buzzing insect music used by Stanley Kubrick in “2001.” Indeed, by the (perhaps intentionally) comic conclusion, the oilman has devolved into “2001’s” ape-man, clubbing his rival’s head in, although with a bowling pin rather than a bone.

Regrettably, there’s not enough to entertain the non-cinephile during the abstract, glum, and static first two hours. Have you ever had that nightmare where you are back in college on final exam day, but you haven’t read a word all semester? I wonder if Anderson similarly woke up and realized he had made 120 minutes of a movie starring the world’s greatest actor but had barely given him anything to do. Whatever the explanation, the last 40 minutes consist of Day-Lewis overacting shamelessly. It’s silly, but at least it’s lively. ■

Rated a soft R, mostly for art house cred.

BOOKS

[*Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left, From Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning*, Jonah Goldberg, Doubleday, 496 pages]

Goldberg's Trivial Pursuit

By Austin W. Bramwell

NOT WITHOUT REASON was Jonah Goldberg's *Liberal Fascism* widely expected to be a bad book. As many predicted from the title, Goldberg does not content himself with rebuking those who call anyone who disagrees with them a fascist. Instead, he invents reasons of his own for calling anyone who disagrees with Jonah Goldberg a fascist. *Liberal Fascism* confirms anew George Orwell's remark—cited by Goldberg without irony—that fascism has no meaning today other than “something not desirable.”

Expecting an unkind reception, Goldberg has packed his book with caveats. “I do not believe liberals are evil, villainous or bigoted,” he writes. “I have not written a book about how all liberals are Nazis or fascists. ... Liberals today are not responsible for what their forefathers believed.” Nevertheless, liberals must “account” for their history and “live in a house of distinctly fascist architecture.” Liberal economics are a “fascist bargain” and Hillary Clinton's *It takes a Village* explicates “the liberal fascist agenda.” Liberals have “totalitarian temptations residing in their hearts.” Patient exegetes can determine for themselves which claims Goldberg is actually making and which he means to take back.

In the meantime, one can make out three reasons for calling liberals the true fascists. First, Goldberg points out that liberalism and fascism have many

elements in common. Both fascists and liberals favor a minimum wage, an expansive social safety net, heavy regulation of industry, and redistributive taxation, but stop short of advocating the abolition of private property. Both scorn constitutional limits on government, indulge in economic populism, and see the working classes as their natural constituencies. Both distrust bourgeois values and traditional religion. On these points and others, Goldberg observes, not only do liberalism and fascism agree, but they reject the ideology of the American conservative movement.

That liberalism and fascism happen to overlap is not surprising. One can find just as many similarities between fascism and movement conservatism: both assail communism, exaggerate security threats, rationalize wars of aggression, and uphold nationalism (what sentimentalists call patriotism) and its symbols (flags, founding myths, worship of national heroes). Nothing in logic compels the ideas of liberalism, fascism, or movement conservatism to cohere into a system. On the contrary, creative theorists can mix sundry political ideas as freely as the ingredients of a cocktail. Given the vast range of questions to which competing ideologies purport to provide answers, the real surprise would be if any two ideologies had nothing in common at all.

Goldberg nonetheless sees ideologies as discrete wholes. He makes much of his discovery, for example, that the Nazis supported organic farming and animal rights and even goes so far as to admonish us to “grapple with the fact that we've seen this sort of thing before.” Readers can spare themselves the energy. That Nazism and contemporary liberalism both promote healthy living is as meaningless a finding as that bloody marys and martinis may both be made with gin. Repeatedly, Goldberg fails to recognize a *reductio ad absurdum*. He tells us that Himmler bemoaned the Christian persecution of witches, just like Wiccan feminists do today, that Hitler once described his doctrine as “reality-based,” just like today's progressives

describe theirs, and that Mussolini was quite smart “by the standards of liberal intellectuals today.” In no case does Goldberg uncover anything more ominous than a coincidence.

Often the parallels between liberalism and fascism prove only that they use the rhetorical strategies available to them. John F. Kennedy's successors did not need obscure socialist theorists to tell them about the power of myth to unite their followers. The concept of a “third way” recurs in any ideology that claims to combine the best of various alternatives. Conspiracy theories run amok not just among Nazis and anti-Bush leftists but across the political spectrum, doubtless because they have more cognitive appeal than the counterintuitive models needed to understand how the modern world actually works. Goldberg's own tendency to blame the world's ills on a handful of evil philosophers from Rousseau to Heidegger is itself a kind of conspiracy theory. That does not make Goldberg an unwitting Nazi.

In elaborating liberalism's similarities to fascism, Goldberg shows a near superstitious belief in the power of taxonomy. He devotes a whole chapter to proving that Nazism was left-wing. Hitler was a revolutionary, Hitler was anti-business, Hitler was a socialist: therefore Hitler was a leftist. Very well, but clearly one can also place Hitler on the Right. An ideology does not come under some kind of curse just because it is put in the same category as Hitler's. Nor by lumping Hitler in with one's political opponents can one somehow burden them with his crimes. Other than scandalizing one's enemies, little is accomplished by applying the categories “Right” and “Left” to Hitlerism.

Goldberg's second argument for “liberal fascism,” presented as the official thesis of the book, is that liberalism and fascism share the same intellectual heritage. Like others who look to intellectual history for insight, Goldberg resorts to genealogical metaphor: liberalism is the “daughter” of progressivism, which is the “sister movement of fascism.” Thus liberalism today has

an “embarrassing family resemblance” to fascism. But ideas do not simply beget other ideas; still less do they pass on genetic defects. These metaphors obscure the lack of any actual causal link between succeeding ideas.

Progressivism, for example, did not in any meaningful sense lead to liberalism. On the contrary, in 1922, Walter Lippmann, the leading liberal intellectual of the 1920s, wrote *Public Opinion*, one of the most trenchant critiques of populism and democracy (and, with it, progressivism) ever penned. Lippmann went on to become Mussolini’s most unsparing American critic, precisely because Lippmann saw in fascism the same dangers that he saw in progressivism. If we must describe intellectual history in biological terms, then it would be more accurate to say that liberalism drove progressivism into extinction than that progressivism gave birth to liberalism.

Even if an American species of fascism (i.e., progressivism) did lead to liberalism, as opposed to merely preceding it in time, this still would not mean that liberalism leads to fascism. For one thing, liberals are entitled at least once a century to change their minds. Even if some who we might call liberals once delighted in Woodrow Wilson’s suppression of dissent, fretted over the pollution of America’s genetic stock, or urged Franklin Roosevelt to assume dictatorial powers, today’s liberals may disown these ideas if they like. Associating modern liberals with the dubious judgments of their predecessors is an *ad hominem* argument, and not even a very beguiling one.

Indeed, liberals plainly have changed their minds when it comes to nearly every damning quotation that Goldberg unearths. This goes not just for the white supremacy of Wilson or the eugenics of Margaret Sanger but for liberals’ preferred political theories as well. For example, borrowing heavily from the enthusiasts at the Claremont Institute, Goldberg thinks it significant that progressive intellectuals scorned individual rights and the Declaration of

Independence. Well, liberals these days do not. Goldberg cannot force liberals to stop championing the Declaration right now just so his attacks on liberalism can be vindicated.

At times, Goldberg seems prepared to concede the unimportance of intellectual history. “One objection to all this might be: So what?” he writes. Instead of answering his own question, he moves on to his third, most ambitious reason for calling liberals fascist: namely, that liberalism and fascism share the same inherent tendencies. Whatever the differences between liberalism and fascism, however much liberals are not actually evil, they both seek the same dolorous ends.

HE ACCUSES LIBERALS OF HARBORING A HIDDEN, UNACKNOWLEDGED AGENDA, EVEN AS HE FLIES INTO A STATE OF HIGH DUDGEON WHEN THEY ACCUSE HIM OF THE SAME THING.

Now, it is unclear how exactly liberalism and fascism share a tendency—which Goldberg portentously dubs the “totalitarian temptation”—that, say, Goldberg’s own movement conservatism does not. Still less is it clear how this tendency actually works. It may suit the purposes of ideologues—who need to manufacture bogeymen to keep their followers entertained—to see ideologies as organisms with inherent tendencies to develop in certain ways. Goldberg, by contrast, has spent some time learning the unpredictable history of 20th-century ideologies. Yet he accuses liberals of harboring a hidden, unacknowledged agenda, even as he flies into a state of high dudgeon when they accuse him of the same thing.

The idea that liberals suffer from a “totalitarian temptation” is in any case without merit. To begin with, far from discerning liberalism’s *telos*, Goldberg does not even describe it correctly. At one point, he writes that liberals cavalierly “dismiss abstract arguments involving universal moral principles.” On the contrary, with the exception of a

few eccentrics such as Richard Rorty, liberals do not hesitate to argue from abstract, universal moral principles such as human rights or equality. Celebrity intellectuals such as Martha Nussbaum even invoke Aristotle to prove that liberalism is everywhere and at all times morally correct. Whatever the errors of liberalism, a failure to appreciate abstract moral obligations is surely not among them.

Goldberg falsely saddles liberalism not just with relativism but with all manner of alleged errors having nothing to do with liberalism. At one point, he exhumes the likes of Derrida and Foucault in order to pummel them once more for introducing postmodernism,

deconstruction, and other continental horrors into the world. What this tiresome routine has to do with liberalism escapes the reader. From the outset, liberals opposed these fads as fiercely as conservatives. Just ask Ronald Dworkin or Brian Leiter. Goldberg, like many movement conservatives, grossly overestimates the influence of postmodernism, doubtless because avowed nihilists make such good straw men (if not good theater, as Derrida and Foucault well knew).

Not only does Goldberg misunderstand liberalism, but he refuses to see it simply as liberalism. Goldberg’s liberals do not just favor a larger role for government, but worship a Hegelian God-State; they do not just welcome the putative moral advances of the 1960s, but are fascinated by apocalyptic violence; they do not just engage in identity politics, but are ushering in “a Nietzschean world where power decides important questions rather than reason”; they do not just hope to curtail tobacco use and fast foods, but are trying to create a *Brave New World*.

Mere disagreement hypertrophies into a cosmic battle that must decide the fate of the universe.

For all his striving for theoretical sophistication, Goldberg manages to come off as something of a philistine. He treats the great philosophers less as thinkers than as figurines to be arranged on a chessboard, each capable of one or two moves. Thus Herder stands for nationalism, Hegel for the divination of the State, William James for the denial of truth, John Dewey for social engineering, Nietzsche for nihilism, and so forth. (Oddly, Goldberg reserves his most curt disdain for those theorists, such as Joseph de Maistre and Carl Schmitt, who faced the truth the most fearlessly.) These names do not lend *Liberal Fascism* gravitas so as much outweigh it with an importance it cannot bear.

To be fair, Goldberg did not come up with his ideas about liberalism on his own. He is a quintessential second-generation conservative, a man who grew up in the movement and chose to make his career within it. Nearly all the authors in the movement's recommended reading list—Richard Weaver, Eric Voegelin, Robert Nisbett, Allan Bloom—appear in *Liberal Fascism*'s footnotes. Not surprisingly, the silliest and most extravagant arguments in his book are also the most conventional, at least to anyone familiar with the ideology of movement conservatism.

Indeed, *Liberal Fascism* reads less like an extended argument than as a catalogue of conservative intellectual clichés, often irrelevant to the supposed point of the book. Here you will read that Rousseau conjured all the evils of the modern world, that the influence of the Frankfurt School is destroying traditional values, that closet Nietzscheans are spreading the disease of moral relativism, and that Deweyan faith in “planners” is corroding our liberties. Intelligent liberals will not cry foul at *Liberal Fascism* so much as groan. They were not fixed in these formulated phrases before and they will not be so fixed now.

Goldberg does at times display a blush of shame. He qualifies his conclu-

sions to the point of taking them all back, insisting that he does not actually mean to say that liberals are dangerous totalitarians. He grants that some of his points are trivial and others may appear outrageous, so that nothing he says should be taken as both true and interesting at the same time. He claims that movement conservatives also suffer from the totalitarian temptation, so that we are “all” fascists now. Why then link liberalism in particular with fascism? Here Goldberg is surprisingly candid: because, he argues, liberals do it to conservatives all the time.

He's right, of course. Many liberals do impute nefarious designs to conservatives. With just a modicum of restraint, Goldberg could have written a very good book. “Look,” he could have said, “Fascism’ has no meaning today, but, in any case, not only does conservatism owe nothing to fascism, but, historically, conservatives in America generally opposed fascism while liberals and leftists often were sympathetic.” Instead, lacking even the excuse of ignorance, he chose to sling the term “fascism” around as casually as the most vulgar leftist. It does not speak well of Goldberg that, by his own admission, he wrote his first book not to enlighten but to exact revenge.

Liberal Fascism completes Goldberg's transformation from chipper humorist into humorless ideologue. Perhaps it was hubris that made him do it. The last important book by a conservative was Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* in 1987, whose ideas had been in circulation for many years before. Goldberg may have convinced himself that by penning yet another disquisition into the “true nature of liberalism,” he could become the first movement conservative in a generation to write something lasting. In the end, he succeeded only in recycling 60 years worth of conservative movement bromides. ■

Austin W. Bramwell is a lawyer in New York City.

[*The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*, A.J. Jacobs, Simon & Schuster, 400 pages]

Living Literally

By Peter Suderman

A.J. JACOBS HAS A PROBLEM with seriousness. No matter what his topic, he's compulsively glib. It's like a tic, a joker's Tourette's. Try as he might, he just can't help it.

In his latest book, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*, the paragraphs prance nicely along in prose as clean and efficient as a Crate & Barrel showroom, and nearly all finish with a droll remark, a pop-culture allusion, a snarky (though rarely cruel) observation.

For Jacobs, an editor at *Esquire* and a former TV critic for *Entertainment Weekly*, the world—or at least his minor misadventures within it—is nothing if not amusing. Sometimes he tries to hold it in, but even when resisting he can't help but tack on a nudge and a wink. After taking a road trip with his wife, he writes, “I'm proud to say I had absolutely no urge to make a double entendre when we passed Intercourse, Pennsylvania, which I see as a moral victory.” He might have avoided making a crude remark at the time, but in retrospect he couldn't let the moment go by without some attempt to exploit its comic potential.

The book opens with Jacobs describing the attention he received for the long, unkempt beard he grew while writing the book. “Strangers have come up to me and petted my beard, like it's a Labrador Retriever puppy or a pregnant woman's stomach,” he writes. Before the first page is finished, he's referenced ZZ Top, Steven Seagal, and Gandalf from *Lord of the Rings*, which is about as high-brow as the book ever gets.

Jacobs calls himself a memoirist, and while that's somewhat accurate, it might be more apt to say he practices the journalistic equivalent of trick-shot pool. There's little at stake in any of his projects, and the situations are all carefully and purposefully designed, but they're entertaining all the same. For his first book, *The Know It All*, he read—and quipped—his way through the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. This time out, he's chronicling a year spent following each and every rule in the Bible as literally as possible. Yes, that means every single rule, or at least all of those that are within legal bounds. (No homosexuals are put to death, but he does hire an intern as a slave.)

Each month of his quest is given a chapter, which is then divided into daily entries that tend to revolve around attempts to follow a single rule, like the obligation to play a harp or the commandment to wear tassels on his clothes. Like his first project, the concept seems designed to provide Jacobs with an opportunity to engage in silly antics, meet up with a sitcom-ready cast of oddballs, and, mostly, crack wise at the Bible's more peculiar passages.

Jacobs's penchant for frivolity might at first seem to make him an unsuitable candidate to explore the culturally fraught topic of Biblical literalism. As with any hot-button issue, views on the matter vary greatly, but it's a safe bet that few think of the topic as light-hearted. At a time when angry young men turn up on nationally televised debates demanding to know whether presidential candidates will swear that every word in the Bible is literally true, when Biblical interpretation comes up in deciding what to teach in schools, when political commentators cite Biblical authority on what limits the government should place on scientific research, it's not unreasonable to wonder what is to be gained from anyone so slavishly devoted to the flip.

Certainly, those expecting piercing insights into current political topics will be disappointed with the book. Jacobs, a lifelong liberal New Yorker, goes to a creationist museum, attends a meeting

of gay-friendly evangelicals, and visits Jerry Falwell's church, but these excursions, like almost everything in the book, are played as genial comic episodes. The author deserves credit for his unwillingness to engage in malicious stereotyping. From Falwell's followers to the Amish, he humanizes and sympathizes with even the quirkiest people. His lack of malice, however, only goes so far, and is, in fact, a signal of his wider refusal to engage with any difficult or unpleasant issue.

Although Jacobs's book steps gingerly around the culture war's obvious flashpoints and seems to want to make peace between the religious and secular worlds, it is revealing in other—almost certainly unintentional—ways. Jacobs, an affable upper-middle class New Yorker fully steeped in the city's cultural and political consensus, is an effective representative of a secular urban set baffled by the Bible and its devotees. This group has managed to avoid almost

any exposure to serious religious belief and views it partially with suspicion, partly with anxiety, but mostly with amusement.

Jacobs makes no secret of his religious ignorance, and, in typical fashion, makes light of it, describing himself as "Jewish in the same way the Olive Garden is an Italian restaurant." He has no beef with religion, but never saw its use:

It's not that my parents badmouthed religion. It's just that religion just wasn't for us. We lived in the 20th century, for crying out loud. In our house, spirituality was almost a taboo subject, much like my father's salary or my sister's clove habit.

This is a perfect encapsulation of the modern secular mindset, in which religious faith—at least the kind that actually influences one's thoughts and deeds—is a relic, as archaic as living in mud huts or hunting for one's own food. But in a world where faith is still

Announcing the 2008 Phillips Foundation Journalism Fellowship Program

\$75,000, \$50,000, \$25,000 Fellowships

If you are a print or online journalist with less than five years of professional experience, a unique opportunity awaits: The Phillips Foundation's \$75,000, \$50,000 and \$25,000 full- and part-time journalism fellowships.

The Phillips Foundation is dedicated to advancing the cause of objective journalism. The fellowship program seeks journalists who share the Foundation's mission to advance constitutional principles, a democratic society and a vibrant free enterprise system.

Winners undertake a one-year project of their choosing focusing on journalism supportive of American culture and a free society. In addition, there are separate fellowships on the environment, free enterprise in society, and law enforcement. Applications are now being accepted for 2008. Applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2008. The winners will be announced at an awards dinner in Washington in the spring. The fellowships will begin on September 1, 2008. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.

For applications and more information, visit our website or write:

Mr. John Farley • The Phillips Foundation
One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 620 • Washington, DC 20001
Telephone 202-250-3887 ext. 609

Email: jfarley@thephillipsfoundation.org • www.thephillipsfoundation.org

Deadline March 1, 2008

an integral part of so many lives, it's an attitude bound to lead to both uncertainty and curiosity. So it's no surprise when Jacobs anxiously asks, "Is my blindness to spirituality a huge defect in my personality?"

That the question is posed in the language of self-help is telling, for it is this spirit that guides Jacobs's project and is also its fatal flaw. Like so many of his secular contemporaries, the author sees religion as part résumé item, part personal-improvement project. As he goes to bed after the first night, he "wonders whether or not [he] took a step toward enlightenment," as if Biblical devotion might substitute for Yoga class.

It is made clear throughout that his main goal is self-gratification. Jacobs continually tells us how good his project makes him feel. Daily prayer, he says, makes him "feel more connected." In order to meet his obligation to pay tithes, he gives money away to charity over the Internet and writes, "when confirmation

pings in, I feel good." The virtues he finds following the Bible's rules are the same as those might find in a new diet or exercise regimen. Jacobs is so devoted to the ongoing quest for personal fulfillment and individual comfort that he never stops to question his underlying premises.

The project's very design belies his misunderstanding. Only the arrogance of modern secularism would be so dismissive as to assume the Bible might be reduced into a series of easy-to-follow rules—or that anyone could actually follow them. Yet for Jacobs, the idea that it should all be simple and straightforward seems self-evident. Early on, he finds himself frustrated with his task and writes that he "hopes all will become clearer." Later on, he complains that the Bible is written in "mysterious code." His goal is "to live the ultimate Biblical life: Or more precisely, to follow the Bible as literally as possible," yet he is never aware that the two are not remotely the same thing.

Jacobs clearly sees his project as something of a lark, and would protest any attempt to saddle it with culture-divide baggage. Please don't read too much into this, his every witticism seems to imply. As much as he might shrug off any suggestion that he's written anything but an amusing book of little consequence, he clearly wants it to be something more—though not too much more.

In addition to the bevy of quips and quirks, almost every entry comes equipped with a tidy lesson. While volunteering at a soup kitchen, he learns to control his anger. He avoids checking the Amazon sales ranking of his previous book in order to curb his arrogance. He finds comfort, if not true communion, in the ritual of scheduled prayer. It's a clever rhetorical game, shucking off responsibility for diving too deep on one hand while trying to conjure up the illusion of meaning on the other. But the lackluster lessons he claims to have learned are barely fit for the next collection from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

It is, to be blunt, a thoroughly lame vision of religion. Jacobs envisions God as some sort of divine Oprah, or maybe

just an apolitical Garrison Keillor, telling cute stories and dispensing bite-sized nuggets of life wisdom.

Jacobs comes across as a thoroughly decent, smart, capable, and, yes, quite funny individual with an admirable lack of malice. Yet his insistence on always playing jester has led him to write a book that reveals a deep trepidation toward the idea of spiritual duty or engagement. Religion, he decides, is perfectly fine, even pleasurable and invigorating, in the way that constructive hobbies can be, so long as it never becomes too much of a commitment.

Flying back from the creationist museum, Jacobs mulls over what he's seen. He tries to reconcile his favorable impression of the curators with his dismal view of their project. "All that creativity and enthusiasm—it seems like such misplaced energy," he writes.

And yet the same could be said for him. His frivolity is more than a penchant for jokes; it's also a sort of denial. After a year of intense Biblical immersion, of prayer and reading and pilgrimage, the best he can come up with are a few platitudes about the comforts of ceremony, the power of thankfulness, and a vague feeling that "there is something transcendent, beyond the everyday." So much for transcendence.

What it all means, or what it requires of anyone, isn't clear because to define it with any clarity would be asking too much. He cheerfully admits to having developed his own "cafeteria religion," one that conveniently allows him to remain agnostic. It's a depressingly shallow conclusion. One's instinct is to catch a train up to the Upper West Side and find Jacobs, grab him by the shoulders, and say, "That's it? That's all? You spent a year reading and living the most influential and important book in human history and all you got out of it were self-help bromides and a few cute stories? You're not serious, are you?"

No, he's not. He never is—and that's too bad. ■

Peter Suderman is associate editor of Doublethink.

MOVING?

Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, www.amconmag.com

Click "subscribe" and then click "address change."

To access your account make sure you have your TAC mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your TAC label with your new address to:

The American Conservative
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 9030
Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

[*They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons*, Jacob Heilbrunn, Doubleday, 289 pages]

The Long Fuse to the Iraq War

By Philip Weiss

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE a title more overdue than *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons*. Ever since neoconservatism's chief contribution to world betterment, the Iraq War, began losing its luster, its adherents have gone into a kind of hiding, and the media has given them cover. Former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, one or both of whom are neoconservatives, have suggested that the word is an anti-Semitic epithet. Others try to avoid it entirely: when Bill Kristol, who was definitely once a neo-conservative, was hired by the *New York Times* as a columnist, the paper called him a "conservative" and said his father Irving Kristol, one of the movement's founders, was a leader of "modern conservatism."

Jacob Heilbrunn asserts that neoconservatives have so far gotten away "scot-free" with planning the greatest foreign-policy disaster since Vietnam. And so his book will call them to account. Not quite.

Heilbrunn achieves one important chore: a forthright social narrative of the neocons as a Jewish movement. Tracing ideological currents in the Jewish community from the 1940s to the 1970s, Heilbrunn, a journalist who himself flirted with neoconservatism, describes how the neocons were propelled by resentments against WASP elites—the men who had ignored the Holocaust, they felt, and "frozen out" Jews from the establishment. It would be hard to overemphasize Heilbrunn's accomplishment. There has been endless prevarication about the fact that

neoconservatism is an element of the Jewish experience, even from liberal Jews. Yet Heilbrunn will have none of it. He says that neoconservatism is "intimately linked with the memory of the Holocaust and the allies' failure to save the Jews during the war" and notes that a "peculiar amalgam of intellectual rigor and ethnic resentment ... lies at the heart of the neoconservative outlook."

And here's the topper: a "lifelong antipathy toward the patrician class among the neocons ... prompted them to create their own parallel establishment."

The sociological insights in his story are often exciting. Neocon godfather Norman Podhoretz had "the classic Jewish experience with the WASP elite" but became a "social climber" himself Heilbrunn says. The other godfather, Irving Kristol didn't at first take the late Allan Bloom seriously. Bloom told Heilbrunn that his relationship with Kristol got "easier" once Bloom, like Kristol, had wealth. The neocons didn't like Kissinger because he was *hoffjude*, "a

Neoconservative ideas might have been confined to small magazines, but the neocons stunned themselves in the 1970s by gaining traction in American political life—through the offices of Washington Sen. Henry Jackson (whom a Saudi ambassador called "more Jewish than the Jews"). With Jackson's support, the neocons staged their first great victory, pressuring the Soviet Union to free Jews. After Daniel Patrick Moynihan won his New York Senate seat with "strong Jewish support" in 1976, the neocons had a second home.

At that time, of course, they were Democrats. Martin Peretz, the once left-wing editor of *The New Republic*, was so shaken by the Left's friendliness to the Palestinians, that he provided access in his pages to hawks, and became "a major force in the mainstreaming of neoconservative ideas." Douglas Feith, an architect of the Iraq disaster, tells Heilbrunn, "I grew up in a liberal Democratic Jewish household." Again Israel was key. At the age of 15, two years into the Israeli occupation of the West Bank,

NEOCONSERVATIVE IDEAS MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO SMALL MAGAZINES, BUT THE NEOCONS STUNNED THEMSELVES IN THE 1970S BY GAINING TRACTION IN AMERICAN POLITICAL LIFE.

court jew of the WASP foreign policy establishment." They didn't like Zbig Brzezinski because he was Polish and the neocons suspected him of Pale-era anti-semitism.

Boiling resentment meant very little without a political program. The neocons got that in the late 1960s. And not surprisingly, the issues had a Jewish character. "With the trial of Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem, the 1967 war, and the rise of black anti-Semitism in the United States, neoconservatism was born," Heilbrunn writes. So now Brzezinski was resented because he was against the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and McGeorge Bundy because he wanted to push Israel to make a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Feith wrote a precocious letter to the *New York Times* attacking the State Department policy in the Middle East. "It is appalling the State Department can be so blind to historical precedent as to call for a withdrawal from the captured area." Captured, not occupied.

Israel-centrism made the neocons lousy wardheelers. They turned against Jimmy Carter on foreign policy, and so helped to elect Ronald Reagan in 1980. Not one to slight the power of his subjects, Heilbrunn says that had they not spurned Carter, he might have been re-elected. Neocons came back to the Dems in 1992, again over Israel. George H.W. Bush—"a scion of the WASP establishment"—was "acting like Jimmy Carter when it came to Israel." Knocking off the

Soviet Union gave the neocons a sense of hubris that would doom their ideas about Iraq. Their thinking was also damaged by the fact that the neocons overprized “filial piety”—and so their sons were enlisted in their fathers’ battles without having to develop their own ideas.

Good stuff. Alas, the book’s riches are set in the ancient past: the ’70s, ’80s, and ’90s. Didn’t the neocons just wreck our image around the world? Heilbrunn doesn’t get to 9/11 till page 228. There are only 60 pages left, and the social insights that have characterized the first half of the book disappear, giving way to a stentorian, op-ed style. The neocons have “debauched” the idea of intervention. They were “hopelessly naïve about the Arab predicament.”

I hoped that this book would do for the parallel establishment what *The Best and the Brightest* did for the last one in the wake of Vietnam. But Heilbrunn seems to have had only three or four

The more troubling reason is self-censorship. It is one thing to write about the past with dispositive energy and quite another to render sharp judgments about the present. Heilbrunn hints at great ideas without the ability to follow through on them. He says the neocons’ obsession with radical Islam as another cold war was a self-delusion—did they also confuse Palestinian suicide bombers with Nazis? He talks about a parallel establishment and “an elite caste,” but doesn’t do anything to explore the huge pots of money available to the neocons and to politicians who stick by Israel. There is no follow through because all these ideas are close to anti-Semitic “canards,” the word the pro-Israel crowd likes to use when anyone tries to address Jewish influence in public life. Heilbrunn is conscious of these tactics. He notes that Francis Fukuyama said much more about the neocons’ love of Israel in an

Between these knifings, Heilbrunn loses his own point of view. He tells us that Bush fell “into the web that the neo-conservatives had woven around him.” Sounds like a conspiracy. Twice the author uses the word “cabal.” Harvard’s government department “was the first academic neoconservative cabal.” Later there is “the Pentagon cabal of neoconservatives.” Not even Walt and Mearsheimer used the word, though maybe they should have. Certainly, the neocons have often formed cells and have not been transparent about their ideas or their aims.

The book’s promotional copy teases the reader with that revelation. The bold-faced paragraph on the back of the galley asserts that many believe that a “cabal” of neocons launched a “war primarily on Israel’s behalf.” If Heilbrunn doesn’t believe this, he ought to state why not. As it is the reader is left with the shadowy sense that the neocons have a pro-Israel agenda that they are not upfront about. But it isn’t a conspiracy, Heilbrunn warns. The neocons have convinced themselves that the U.S. and Israel have congruent interests. “They just believe this stuff. They’re not agents,” an anonymous source tells him, speaking of Cheney aide David Wurmser, who is married to an Israeli.

Jacob Heilbrunn’s book should be hailed as a real sign of progress in assessing responsibility for the Iraq War, and yet the real work remains undone. I understand why there are inhibitions. Blaming the neocons’ Israel-first worldview for the war raises deep fears among Jews. The liberal *Forward* greeted Walt and Mearsheimer’s paper on the Israel lobby with the bitter retort: “In Dark Times Blame the Jews.” We need to get past this sort of defensiveness if we are going to understand our own democracy, let alone the Middle East. What Heilbrunn rightly calls an “elite caste” could lose status, yes. But others’ lives are at stake. ■

Philip Weiss is at work on a book about Jewish issues. He blogs at www.philipweiss.org/mondoweiss/

THE READER IS LEFT WITH THE SHADOWY SENSE THAT **THE NEOCONS HAVE A PRO-ISRAEL AGENDA THAT THEY ARE NOT UPFRONT ABOUT.** BUT IT ISN’T A CONSPIRACY, HEILBRUNN WARNS.

interviews with Iraq war planners and we learn little about their psyches. How do they feel about Israel? How much money do they make? Do they think there is going to be another Holocaust? What was the importance of Cheney’s American Enterprise Institute chapter (both he and his wife have been fellows at AEI) to his inoculation with neocon doctrine? Heilbrunn doesn’t provide answers.

There are two reasons for his failure, the first vocational, the second far more worrisome. Heilbrunn was evidently under a deadline, and having spent years working on the first part of his book, he appears to have rushed the second half. His writing goes downhill. In the galley, two sentences in a row have the verb “would end up.” Twice on the same page former Sen. Bob Kerrey provides “important ... cover” for the neocons.

article than he did in his subsequent book and chalks the scholar’s silence up to “the bullying tactics the neoconservatives often employed to avert any criticism of Israel, however mild.” Well, Heilbrunn seems to have worried about the same thing.

As for bullying, what are we to make of Heilbrunn’s own vicious outbursts toward anybody who has tried to change American policy toward the hateful Israeli occupation? Thus George Kennan worried about “so-called ethnic lobbies.” Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer’s groundbreaking 2006 paper, “The Israel Lobby,” is dismissed as an “addled essay”, without another word. Jimmy Carter is accused of “crackpot moralism.” Edward Said was “a smooth, urbane purveyor of much nonsense about the Middle East.”

Voting With My Feet

WARREN, MICHIGAN—I love Ed Rollins like a brother, but it's Mike Huckabee who inspired me to return to politics—for such a time as this.

Rollins was my boss at the Reagan White House in the early '80s, and then I followed him to the Reagan-Bush '84 re-election campaign—and thus into morning-in-America glory. We have kept up ever since.

Over the last few years, we have both returned to the church; he's Catholic, I'm Protestant. And we both, from our different perspectives, became fans of Gov. Mike Huckabee. Ed and I both agreed that Huckabee combines solid conservatism, a gentle manner, and a willingness to try new things that reminds us of, yes, Ronald Reagan.

So when the call came, I was ready to hear it. I resigned from FoxNews and from *Newsday*, and signed on as a senior adviser, traveling around with the campaign. (I don't know what my status with TAC is; if this piece runs, I'll know I'm still a contributing editor.) But don't let my fancy new title fool you: among my greatest accomplishments has been figuring out how to print a document from my laptop at Kinkos. And yes, I'm re-experiencing campaign life, such as not being able to tell whether your heart is beating faster because you hear something inspiring or because you think you might have made an error in a policy paper or because you have drunk too much coffee and eaten too many donuts.

Actually, not donuts. The Huckabee campaign is lean, if not mean. Without anywhere near the sorts of resources commanded by some other candidates, we bump along without the perks that many campaigns enjoy. Don't get me wrong: It's not *The Grapes of Wrath* for

us out here, but it's not the J.W. Marriott, either.

As for Governor Huckabee, he is a low-cal man. Many people know about his epic diet—the loss of more than 100 pounds—but what sets Huckabee apart from most weight-losers is that he was governor of Arkansas at the time, and so he had the opportunity to convert his own experience into a teachable moment for the citizens of his state. Some will call it sappy, others will call it “Love Thy Neighbor.” Now he is a believer in prevention, including both better diet and more exercise; as he says on the stump, “We don't have health-care, we have sick care.” That is, people stop taking care of themselves, they get sick prematurely, and somebody pays the tab. There's not enough money for that kind of healthcare.

HUCKABEE COMBINES SOLID CONSERVATISM, A GENTLE MANNER, AND A WILLINGNESS TO TRY NEW THINGS THAT REMINDS US OF, YES, RONALD REAGAN.

But the governor is not judgmental; he knows he came from the sort of family where eating too much wasn't such a bad idea—because you could never be too sure about that next meal. As he reminds audiences, “I know the stone from which I was hewn, I know the rock from which I was quarried.”

Like the minister he once was, he pauses to offer a word of encouragement—to an old lady in a walker, to an unemployed husband and father, to a gymnasium full of Christian home-

schoolers in St. John, Michigan; he first apologized for interrupting their basketball game. Then he said to them, “You will face giant challenges in your life, but you are never taller and stronger than when you are on your knees praying to God.” Then he wrapped up, told them to have a good game and “remember to show sportsmanlike conduct.”

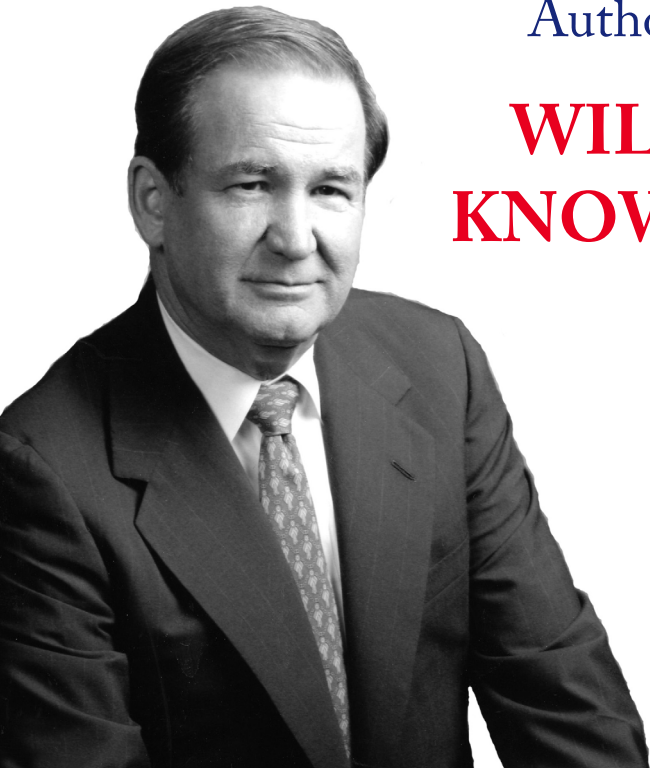
For adults, Governor Huckabee has a more serious message. Here's the headline of *The Detroit Free Press* on Jan. 15: “Huckabee appeals to working class/On factory tour, he cites tax plan, family-friendly efforts.” The governor is for free trade, but he is also for fair trade. If the Chinese are “cheating” by putting lead paint on toys and poison in dog food, well, that's not fair. If American workers have to meet stringent labor and environmental standards, then they shouldn't be left unprotected to compete against workers who don't get the benefit of those social-contract basics. Makes sense to me. Is it really a good idea to export our factories overseas, so that the

American middle class is hollowed out? So that others can generate CO2 without regard to emissions controls? So that China can develop its arsenal of non-democracy? I don't think so.

Mike Huckabee, mindful of the Truman precedent, wants a new Fair Deal for Americans. He cares about their jobs but he also cares about traditional family values, including the rights of the unborn. Plus, he was a great governor, he is a great speaker, and he is a very nice guy. That's why I'm here. ■

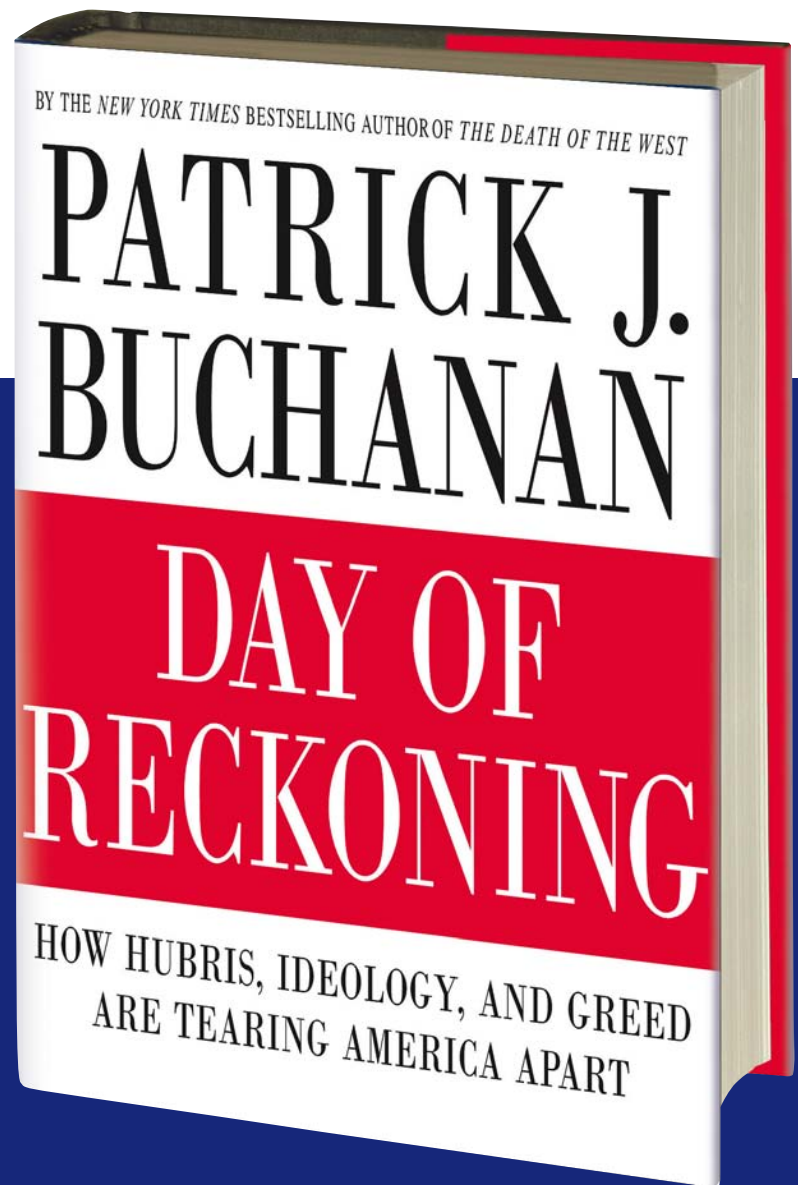
PAT BUCHANAN, *New York Times* Bestselling
Author of *The Death of the West* asks:

WILL THE AMERICA WE KNOW AND LOVE SURVIVE?



America is coming apart at the seams. Foreign and domestic forces seek an end to American sovereignty and independence. Before us looms the prospect of our nation dividing along lines of ethnicity, class and culture. President Bush's ideology of "democratism" has led us to the precipice of strategic disaster abroad and savage division at home.

Pat Buchanan offers a radical but necessary program, for neither party is addressing the real crisis: whether we survive as one nation, or disintegrate into what Theodore Roosevelt called a "tangle of squabbling nationalities;" not a nation at all.



Read *Day Of Reckoning* for
sound answers to critical questions...

buchanan.org

thomasdunnebooks.com

THOMAS DUNNE BOOKS

Available now wherever books are sold.

 St. Martin's Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED